

NEW YORK, MAY 7, 1926

No. 1075

FAME AND

Price 8 Cents

FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

AFTER THE BIG BLUE STONE;
OR, THE TREASURE OF THE JUNGLE. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*

AND OTHER STORIES



As he sprang eagerly forward a puff of greenish smoke suddenly issued from under the gem and enveloped his face. Its overpowering odor staggered the boy. He threw up his arms wildly and fell back into the arms of his companion.

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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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After the Big Blue Stone

OR, THE TREASURE OF THE JUNGLE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Which Treats of the Big Blue Stone.

"Then ye never heard about that there big blue stone in the stummick of the bronze idol in the temple of Jumna?" ejaculated William Flint, a thick-set seaman, his mahogany-hued countenance beaming upon two good-looking, stalwart American boys who sat facing him on the forecastle of the schooner "Gleam." The vessel rode at anchor at the northern extremity of the Strait of Manaar, on the famous pearl fishing grounds of Ceylon.

On her port bow lay the coast of Madras, India—a thread of low, white sandhills, dotted with the dark-brown thatch of fishermen's huts and the vivid green of cocoanut palms. The hour was three in the afternoon of a cloudless July day; the fitful land breeze had died away, leaving the whole surface of the sea like a sheet of undulating silver. An eighth of a mile distant on the schooner's starboard quarter a score or more of native diving-boats rose and dipped to the regular motion of the long ground-swell. The boys, whose names were Clif Halliday and Ben Wade, had come down from the town of Madras, which lies on the southeastern coast of the Indian peninsula, to see how the pearl fishery was conducted. Clif's father was the American consul at Madras. He had held the post for some years, and Clif, having been left at a Long Island military academy to prepare for college, had not seen him nor his mother for many moons, as he termed it.

His graduation from the academy offered Clif the opportunity to pay his father and mother a flying visit, and he had taken immediate advantage of the fact. Ben Wade's father, mother and sister having arranged to spend the summer in Europe, Ben found no difficulty in getting permission to accompany his chum, Clif, to India for his vacation instead of going with the family on their continental tour. Clif and Ben went as far as England with the Wades. After spending a week in London seeing the sights, Mr., Mrs. and Miss Wade accompanied the two boys to Southampton and saw them off in one of the Occidental Steamship Company's steamers for the Far East. The steamer carried them across the Mediterranean Sea, through the Isthmus of Suez to the Red Sea, down that long narrow body of water to the Gulf

of Aden, which they reached through the Strait of Bab-el Mandez, and thence across the edge of the Arabian Sea to the city of Bombay on the western coast of India.

From there they took passage on a steamer bound for Calcutta, but which stopped a few hours at Madras. Clif was tickled to death to meet his mother and father again after a separation of nearly three years, and, as a matter of course, they were just as pleased to see him. The boys put in a whole week in Madras and its environs, and were fascinated with the manners, customs and habits of the strange people they met there. Then the opportunity presenting itself for them to visit the pearl fisheries, of which they had read and heard so much, Clif persuaded his father to allow them to go down to the grounds under the protection of Captain Glaze, the master of the schooner "Gleam," which was one of the vessels engaged in the trade.

Clif and Ben soon made themselves great favorites aboard the schooner with the captain, the mate, and William Flint, an able seaman who bossed the lascars. They took a particular fancy to Flint, because he proved an inexhaustible storehouse of wonderful adventures in Indian waters, and along the coast, as well as the interior of the big peninsula. On the afternoon our story opens he had been telling them about an astonishing adventure he had participated in during the previous year. He and a small party had started on business for a town fifty miles inland from the shore of the Strait of Manaar. Not far from their destination their guide deserted them, leaving them in a pretty bad fix. They were forced to keep on without him, and, as a consequence, got lost in one of the numerous Indian jungles, which Flint declared were as bad as a labyrinth to one unacquainted with the country.

After wandering several days at random they came upon one of the small temples so numerous in India. This was a particularly sacred one, hidden in the depths of the jungle, and dedicated to a deity called Jumna. They entered the edifice unobserved and obtained a close view of the idol representing Jumna. Flint declared that this particular god was famed throughout the country for the wonderful blue stone it wore in the centre of a gold star affixed to the region of the

stomach. This stone was an enormous sapphire of exceptional purity which had been cut with astonishing skill to resemble the human eye. There wasn't a native, however ignorant, who had not heard about this great blue stone, and marvelous properties ascribed to it. It was said that on the annual festival of the god Jumnus, which was observed with many religious rites at the temple, the blue eye of the idol would wink with great solemnity a number of times. No intelligent foreigner believed any such yarn as that, but the natives put absolute faith in the alleged fact, and hundreds of them asserted with every evidence of sincerity that they had seen the eye move in its socket.

Probably it did move through some chicanery of the priests in charge of the temple, for it was to their interest to keep up the reputation of the god. Clif and Ben had not been long enough in India to learn about this big blue stone with its mysterious qualities, and consequently showed their ignorance about it when Flint spoke of it. That led to his query with which this chapter opens.

"No," replied Clif, "neither of us ever heard about it. It must be a fine stone, and I'd give a whole lot to see it."

"I reckon ye are not likely to see it, my hearty," replied Flint.

"Why not? Couldn't Ben and I hire a guide at one of those villages alongshore to take us to the temple of the Jumna?"

"Ye couldn't hire a guide to do that for love nor money," replied the sailor, wagging his head in a very positive manner.

"We couldn't?"

"No, ye couldn't. It's ag'in their religion to do it. Foreigners are not allowed to inspect that there idol."

"But you and your friends inspected it," said Clif.

"That was an accident, and we came near losin' our lives. The priest told us we had committed a sacrilege, but one of the party squared him by the present of a fine pearl he owned. That there pearl saved our bacon. Them priests will wink at anythin' if you pay 'em enough. Had the common natives nabbed us in that shrine we'd never have got out alive, pearl or no pearl. I believe a million dollars in British sov'rings wouldn't have saved us. Them ordinary critters are the worst fanatics about their religion ye ever seen. The priests, who are high caste and somewhat educated rascals, play 'em for all they're worth."

"What does that Jumna idol look like, anyway?"

"You've seen a tailor, haven't ye, squattin' with crossed legs on a table?"

"Sure I have," said Clif.

"So have I," chipped in Ben. "Does it look like a tailor?"

"No. It only has the attitude of a tailor, otherwise it looks like a Chinese joss with a small pagoda on his head. It has strings of all kinds of valuable gems hangin' from its shoulders, and a rope of the finest pearls you ever seen in your life slung around its neck close under the chin. The whole thing is made of dark bronze with gold trimmin's."

"Real gold?" asked Ben.

"I couldn't swear that it's real gold, for I didn't get close enough to the old thing to make sure of

it, but it looks enough like gold to be taken for it."

"The big blue stone is worn on the idol's stomach, you say?" said Clif.

"Yes. It's the center-piece of a large blue star."

"Does it look like a human eye?" asked Ben.

"It looks enough like it to give you the shivers."

"What does the idol stand on?"

"On the top of three solid blocks of some kind of stone, each smaller than the lower one, like a pair of steps."

"How much do you suppose that blue stone is worth?"

"I should reckon it's worth a mighty big sum of money."

"Isn't the door of the temple locked?"

"It hasn't got no door to it, jest a big openin' facin' the jungle."

"I suppose it's guarded all the time?" said Clif.

"We didn't see no guard. All we seen was the priest, who came out of a small room to one side. He turned black with fury when he seen us in that there temple, and began sayin' somethin' that only one of our party understood. It was a good thing he did understand the fellow's lingo. If he hadn't——"

"Well?" said Ben, as the sailor paused.

"We'd have been angels long afore this."

"How many were there in your party?"

"Four."

"You had some kind of arms, didn't you?" asked Clif.

"We had our knives, and the fellow who was expert at Hindoo had a revolver."

"Then why need you have been afraid of a single priest?"

"He had his hand on a bell-rope. Had he pulled it, as he easily could have done, he would have had help enough around him in two minutes to have done us up, all right. The chap who understood and spoke the same dialect as the priest had presence of mind enough to chip in a little palaver at the right minute. The priest listened with his hand on the bell-rope. Then he offered to let us off if we'd swear to keep our visit to the temple a secret and come up with enough to satisfy his greed. The pearl was the only thing we had worth his notice, and he let the matter go at that."

"How did you escape from the jungle?"

"The priest furnished us with a guide and so we reached our destination."

"Gee! But you had a hot time of it," laughed Clif.

"I reckon we did, my hearty," replied Flint, starting to fill his pipe.

At that moment Ben, who glanced in the direction of the diving-boats, jumped on his feet with an exclamation.

"Look, Clif, look!" he cried, pointing across the water. "There's something doing among the boatmen."

Clif got on his feet, and so did Flint, and the three walked over to the starboard rail to get a better look.

CHAPTER II.—How the Shark-Charmer Is Made to Walk the Plank.

"Looks like a row," suggested Clif, after taking a good view of the scene of the disturbance.

"That's what it does," coincided Ben. "Hello! They've started for the schooner. There's something wrong for fair."

"I thought the boats were not permitted to leave the diving ground until the signal gun is fired?" said Clif, looking at Flint.

"They hain't, but them chaps seem to be so excited over somethin' that's happened that they've overlooked the regulations," replied the sailor.

"It's probably lucky for them that Captain Glaze is ashore," said Ben.

"Well, Mr. Robertson, the mate, will make it just as hot for them if they deserve it," said Clif.

By this time the excited cries which had first attracted the attention of those on the schooner's deck had been exchanged by the boatmen for a weird chant to which every oar kept time. Erect in the stern of the foremost boat an old white-headed man led the song, while at the end of each measure the voice of every boatman raised a chorus that seemed to fairly lift the boats out of the water. Although Clif and Ben were unaware of the fact the song was made up by the old singer as the boats came on, the refrain or chorus being the same all the way through. The words referred to some incident which had happened at the diving ground, and was the cause of the present manifestation. All that the boys could make out of it was something about a diver and a shark, and then something about a charm-seller. Flint, however, seemed to understand the drift of the song, and translated its import to the boys. The boats having reached the side of the schooner the chant ceased abruptly, the heavy oars were noisily shipped and, amid a perfect babel of voices, the boatmen came swarming up the side, until the deck was one mass of wildly gesticulating, dusky humanity. The white-headed boatman, who towered head and shoulders above his comrades, pushed his way to the front, and commanding silence among his followers, addressed himself to the mate of the schooner.

"Sa'b," said he in pigeon English, "one year back big sa'b (meaning Captain Glaze) ordered Salambo eat plenty blows for sellin' charm to diver-man. All same, this season he come back and sell plenty charm, tellin' diver-man to put charm 'round neck, shark no eat him up. He tell plenty lie—this aft'noon one shark done come, eat diver, charm, all!"

"Let him stand forward," replied Mrs. Robertson, with difficulty suppressing a grin.

The culprit, a sleek old fellow with shaven head, crafty eyes, and a rosary of wooden beads about his neck, was shoved to the fore.

"Are you the chap who was whipped off the grounds last year for selling charms?" demanded the mate.

"I same rascal," admitted the fellow, salaaming until his shaven head almost touched the deck.

"He's a cheeky rooster, upon my word," remarked Clif.

"I'm bound to say that I admire his nerve," said Ben.

"I wonder what the mate will do with him?" said Clif.

"I know what I'd do with him," chuckled Ben.

"What would you do with him?" asked Clif.

"I'd give him a dose of his own physic."

"I don't catch your meaning."

"I'd make him walk the plank in regular pirate style."

"What! You'd give him to the sharks!" almost gasped Clif.

"He boasts about the efficacy of his shark charms that he sells to the boatmen, why not compel him to give a public test of their value? If a shark comes along and fails to gobble him up it will give his business a boom. I believe in encouraging trade."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Clif. "Why don't you suggest your idea to the mate?"

"I will if you back me up."

"I'll do it on one condition," replied Clif.

"What is your condition?"

"That you also suggest that two of the lascars take a boat and lie under the schooner's quarter in readiness to pick the rascal up as soon as he comes to the surface after his plunge. It would be carrying the joke altogether too far to let the old sinner be actually caught by a shark, for of course his charm is a pure fake."

"I accept your amendment," replied Ben. "All I want to do is to give the rascal a good scare."

Accordingly the two boys walked over to the spot where the mate and the charm-seller stood.

"What did you think of doing to this man?" asked Ben of Mr. Robertson.

"Give him three dozen lashes on the back."

"I know a better punishment for him," said Ben.

Salambo heard his words, which he readily understood, and favored the boy with a wicked look. The mate looked at Ben in some surprise, and then said:

"What is it?"

"Come this way and I'll tell you."

Mr. Robertson and the two boys retired a few steps and then Ben outlined his scheme for giving the charm-seller the shock of his life. The idea appealed to the waggish side of the mate and he agreed to put it into execution. He motioned to Flint and ordered him to have the boat lowered and in position to pick Salambo up. Then he walked up to the old villain.

"Do you happen to have one of those charms about you?"

"One here got, sa'b," replied the rascal, producing from the folds of his waist-cloth a fragment of palmleaf covered with cabalistic characters. "Sa'b like to buy? Sell cheap. Sure 'tection 'gin shark. No eat pusson got one dese 'bout him."

"Keep it yourself," replied the mate, "you'll soon need it. Hi, lascar!" to one of the schooner's crew who stood near. "Fetch a plank here and run it out over the side."

By the time the plank was brought and run out until half of its length projected over the water Flint came up and by a sign intimated that the boat was in readiness. The crowd of natives, guessing that something unusual was on the tapis, craned their necks eagerly. The charm-seller seemed to guess what was in store for him, and, being ignorant of the fact that a boat was waiting to pick him up directly he rose from his involuntary bath, began to give plain symptoms of fright. He flopped down on his knees and begged for mercy. The mate, aware that the old villain would incur little danger, was deaf to all his appeals, and made a signal to the lascars to run the old man out on the plank. The quak-

ing wretch was seized and dragged to the schooner's side. His rolling orbs met the laughing glances of the two boys. Ascribing his present unhappy predicament to them he favored them with a look so diabolical that they shuddered in spite of themselves.

"Lord!" palpitated Ben. "If there isn't murder in that fellow's eye I don't know what the look is like."

The rascal was placed upon the plank.

"One, two, three—let him slide!" cried the mate.

The deck end of the plank rose high in the air, then descended with a crash, and with a scream of terror the charm vendor disappeared over the side. A tremendous shout rose from the natives on the deck, and with one accord they all rushed to the schooner's side, which they reached just as Salambo's head reappeared above the surface. Another moment and he was dragged into the boat by the two lascars, where, catching sight of the laughing countenances of the two boys at the rail above, he shook his fist at them in mute menace, and was rowed ashore.

"I guess that will teach him a lesson that he won't forget in a hurry," said Ben as he and his companion watched the boat recede.

"Maybe it will," replied Clif. "However, we're not likely to see him again."

But in this forecast of the future he was mistaken, as events speedily proved.

CHAPTER III.—In Which Clif Discovers a Small Fortune in Pearls.

"Say, Ben, let's ask permission of Captain Glaze to go ashore," said Clif on the following afternoon. "I'm tired of monkeying around the deck of this schooner."

"I'm with you," replied Ben. "Any kind of a change will suit me."

"I suppose it's up to me to ask the skipper," said Clif.

"Yes. Your father put us in his charge. He won't let us go alone, you can bet."

"Flint will be just the man to go with us."

"But he's busy."

"What of it? The captain can let him off duty."

"Well, run along and make your application. I'll wait here till you get back."

Clif walked aft and entered the cabin. It was a fine day, with a cloudless sky. The breeze was so light and fitful that it barely ruffled the surface of the sea about the schooner. The boys had been over to the diving-ground all morning and now that they had had their dinner they were longing for some fresh kind of excitement. Captain Glaze listened to Clif's request and did not seem to quite approve of it.

"I haven't anybody to send with you," he said, knitting his brows.

"Couldn't Flint go?" asked Clif.

"I can't spare him," replied the captain.

The boy looked disappointed.

"Isn't there anybody else that could go with us?" he asked.

"Nobody I could trust you with."

"Can we take the small boat and row as far as the beach and back?"

"You could do that if you will promise not to go further than the beach."

"All right, sir. Is it dangerous for us to visit one of the villages alone?"

"Not particularly; but you might get into trouble in some way, and I can't afford to take any chances. I am responsible for your safety and return to Madras."

So Clif returned to the deck and his friend, and told Ben the result of his interview with the skipper.

"We'll go as far as the shore, anyway," said Ben. "It will be a good idea to carry our revolvers along and a pocketful of cartridges. I don't expect we'll have any occasion to use them unless we see a shark en route, and then we can take a pop at him. I wouldn't mind killing a good-sized man-eater if only to get revenge for the death of that diver who was eaten up yesterday afternoon because he put too much faith in that charm Salambo sold him. I wouldn't feel so awfully bad if I heard that a shark got hold of the old villain himself. He's a fakir of the first water."

"What kind of water?"

"Sea water, of course," grinned Ben.

"If we had liberty to go ashore we might meet the rascal again."

"I'm not anxious to meet him. He's got it in for us, for he holds us responsible for the plank-walking incident."

"What of it?" replied Clif. "He wouldn't dare play any trick on us."

"You can't tell what he might dare to do. Look at the nerve he had to come back to the grounds to sell his bogus charms after having been whipped for the same offense last year."

"I must admit that he's a sly old codger."

"Sly isn't the word. He's a past-master in wickedness. You saw the look he gave us just because the lascars shoved him on the plank."

"I did. It was a bad one."

"A sort of concentrated essence of hate. Then, after the boat picked him up he shook his fist at us. He means to get square if he can."

"How can he? We're under Captain Glaze's protection."

"We wouldn't be under the captain's protection ashore—that is, only so far as his influence obtains in this neighborhood."

"Well, in broad daylight, with a revolver apiece in our clothes, I guess there is little fear of Salambo doing us."

The boys got into the small boat alongside, took up the oars and began to row toward the near-by shore. They took their time, for it was mighty hot. Finally they reached the beach, got out of the boat and secured it to the shore by means of a stake.

"These sands are like an oven," remarked Clif, lifting his helmet to cool his dripping forehead.

"Yes, the shore feels hotter than blazes," coincided Ben, lifting his helmet, too.

"Come on, there's a row of banyan trees yonder. We can sit in the shade and look around."

There was a small village near by of thatched huts. A crowd of natives were gathered around a dusky-looking man who was standing on an elevation in the middle of the mob apparently addressing the others. The gathering was shouting and gesticulating in a strenuous kind of way.

"I wonder what's going on there?" Clif said curiously.

"Ask me something easier, Clif. Maybe they're holding a political meeting."

"They are—like fun! They seem to be buying something. See those chaps walking out of the crowd with their arms full of brown things."

"Let's go over and see what's on foot," suggested Ben.

"The captain made me promise that we wouldn't go very far from the shore."

"That isn't far. Only about a couple of hundred yards," replied Ben.

Clif allowed himself to be persuaded, so the boys got up and approached the group. They soon discovered that the black man in the centre of the crowd was auctioning off some pearl oysters. The boys had heard about these sales, which were eagerly patronized by the natives, who sometimes got great bargains, though most of the time nothing to speak of.

"It's a kind of lottery, like the sales held once or twice a year by the express companies in the States," said Clif. "The natives bid on a lot of oysters on the chance of finding some valuable pearls in them. They're crazy over the game ever since one of the natives found over sixty big pearls in some oysters he had bought in, and made his fortune for life. Although these chaps seldom find a pearl of any great value they all hope that some day luck will come to them, and that they'll get rich right off the reel."

"There is always the chance," replied Ben. "I'd like to have a go myself, just for the fun of the thing."

"We couldn't bid. We don't know what to offer."

"Any old price would do as long as it's low."

"The auctioneer wouldn't understand us."

"Ask one of the natives to do it for us."

"How could we? We can't speak their lingo."

Ben had to admit that there appeared to be insurmountable difficulties in their way, and reluctantly gave up the idea. At that moment he spied a native who had been aboard the schooner, and whom he knew could speak English after a fashion. On the spur of the moment he rushed up to the fellow and told him what they wanted to do. The native grinned, nodded and pushing his way forward bid in a batch of oysters for the boys at an absurdly low figure. Clif handed him the coin with another for himself. The native gathered up the oysters and handed them to the boys. They were dirty-looking objects, and smelt horribly, for they had been several days out of water, standing in the sun in a small pyramid.

"Gee! But they smell like a putrid sewer," cried Ben, holding his nose. "Where shall we take them, Clif? To the boat?"

"No, under the palms where we were sitting down a while ago."

They carried the lot to the shady spot, laid them on the ground and got out their jackknives.

"Hang me, if I care much to open them," said Ben, contemplating their purchase with an air of disgust.

"The stench is something terrible, I must admit," answered Clif, fingering one of the oyster shells gingerly.

"Our fingers will smell for a week," said Ben. "I don't believe we'll find a pearl in them, anyway."

"Don't be a quitter," laughed Clif. "It was your idea to buy them."

"I know it was, but I didn't expect to buy something that smells like a morgue."

"Well, let's divide them up and try our luck. There are twenty of them. I'll let you have first pick, then if there's a fine pearl in one of them we won't have any excuse to quarrel over it. It will belong to the one who selected the oyster."

Accordingly they each picked ten oysters alternately, and then, with no very great enthusiasm, began to open them, one at a time. The opening of the bivalves was attended with a more acute smell that almost turned the boys' stomachs.

"Say, no more of this for me," said Ben, holding up his slimy and foul-smelling fingers after tossing away his tenth and last oyster. "This is a regular sell. Not a solitary pearl have either of us found for our filthy work."

"I've got one oyster left," said Clif.

"You'd better fire it away without letting out any more skunk odors," said Ben.

"It might contain a handsome pearl."

"If it does I'll eat the oyster."

"Yes, you would. I think I see you doing it. You wouldn't even make a bluff at doing it for a hundred-dollar bill."

"You bet I wouldn't. There's poison enough in one of these rotten oysters to depopulate a village."

Clif picked up the last oyster, which was a good-sized fellow.

"How much am I offered for this last bivalve?" he grinned.

"Hold on there! Don't shove it in my direction. I know when I've had enough of anything," objected Ben. "I'm going down to the water to wash my hands."

"Wait till we see if there's anything in this fellow and then I'll go with you."

Ben waited, but without any great display of interest. The chances of their finding a pearl in the last oyster did not strike him as being very favorable. Clif, after a flourish of his arm, forced open the shell of the bivalve. As his eye caught a glance of the interior of the shell he uttered a shout. It contained a magnificent pearl.

CHAPTER IV.—How Fortune Plays the Boys a Slippery Trick.

"Gracious!" gasped Ben, while Clif regarded his prize with staring eyes.

So taken up were they with the good fortune which had come to Clif through the putrid oyster that neither of them observed a black face with a clean shaven head thrust through the thick verdure around the foot of the palm tree behind them. A pair of snaky eyes, glittering with craft and greed, peered cautiously at them and the opened oyster shells containing the pearl. The intruder was Salambo, the shark-charmer, who had been sleeping in the grass, and who had been awakened by Clif's shout.

"There's no flies on this oyster," said Clif after he had recovered from his surprise.

"Bet your life there isn't. Let's see the pearl you've got."

Clif extracted the glistening globule from its unsightly case.

"A beauty!" he said. "I'll bet Captain Glaze will open his eyes when he sees this."

"I should remark," replied Ben. "Let me see it."

"Sure."

"Thanks," said Ben in a tone of satisfaction. "Hold on," he added as Clif was about to throw the shell away. "I see something yellow in one corner. Stick your knife in the meat, that side."

With the point of his knife Clif prodded the substance of the oyster at the point indicated, and presently laid bare a large pearl shaped like a pear, a luster of the purest pale yellow.

"A gold pearl!" exclaimed Clif. "I never saw one like that before."

"A gold pearl!" repeated Ben. "You're in great luck, old man. Don't you remember that the captain told us at dinner the other day that a gold pearl was a great rarity, found about once in twenty years? He said that though they were in no particular demand among foreigners, the wealthy natives, more particularly the Indian priests, were always anxious to obtain them, and were ready to pay an enormous price for a pure specimen."

"I remember. I guess I'll be able to make a good thing out of this one."

"I'll bet you will. Your father will be able to sell it for you."

Salambo, concealed behind the trunk of the banyan tree within a few feet of them, leaned eagerly forward. So close was he to the boys that he could hear every word of their conversation. As he listened an avaricious glitter shone in his crafty eyes, and he rubbed his hands unctuously together. He knew the value of a golden pearl as well as any person in India. The possession of such a gem would mean a fortune to him, for he had in his mind's eye a priest who was very eager to obtain a yellow pearl of pure water. He would be able to name his own price. So he resolved by hook or by crook to get that gold pearl away from Clif Halliday. That would be as good as any revenge he could take upon the boy.

The boys walked down to the water's edge and cleaned their hands as thoroughly as they were able, but they could not entirely remove the fetid smell of the putrid oyster meat. Then they returned to the shade of the banyan tree, utterly unconscious that their movements were under the observation of as big and crafty a rascal as the aboard the schooner. He now took the chamois covering from his watch and put the pearls in it as a temporary receptacle until they returned aboard the schooner. He now took the chamois bag out of his pocket so that he and Ben could examine the silver globule with its solitary yellow mate at their leisure. When the boys went down to the water Salambo gritted his teeth with savage disappointment, for he thought they were about to take to their boat and go back to the schooner.

Such a move on their part would, in all probability, have put the yellow pearl, which he prized the most, out of his reach. It was with unbounded satisfaction that he saw them turn around, after washing their hands, and return to the shade of the tree. Clif rubbed off each pearl carefully with his handkerchief, and then he and Ben examined and commented upon them separately, the gold pearl coming in as the finale of

their inspection. At length he returned them to the chamois bag and wrapped the bag in his handkerchief, which he knotted.

"Nobody would dream that there's a king's ransom in that little bundle," he said, holding it up lightly.

As he spoke a dusky, naked arm was thrust forward through the leaves, sinewy fingers grabbed the handkerchief, and it was wrenched from his grasp. Clif and Ben were both too astonished to make a move for a moment or two, then they sprang to their feet to make things warm for the thief.

"There he goes!" cried Ben, pointing to the rascal, who was running in the direction of the village as hard as he could go.

Both recognized the old villain on the instant.

"It's that scoundrel, Salambo!" ejaculated Clif.

"He'll get away with the goods if we don't look lively," said Ben.

The boys started after the shark-charmer as fast as they could. They found to their mortification that the old man could run as fast as they.

"He'll escape us. Let us fire at him," said Ben, drawing his revolver.

"No, no," returned Clif. "We might hit one of the villagers, and then we'd get into trouble. We must try to catch him somehow."

Salambo, however, soon vanished behind one of the thatched houses, and when the boys reached the hut there was no sign of him.

"We'll have to hunt him out," said Clif. "This village isn't so large."

The hunted the shark-charmer in vain, and were subjected to the stares of the native men, women and children.

"There's the man who bought the oysters for us," said Ben. "He speaks English pretty well. Let's hire him to help us."

Clif was willing to do anything that promised to bring him back his pearls, so the native was stopped and interviewed.

"Salambo, eh?" grinned the man, whose name was Kurhora. "Him big rascal."

"Bet your life he is," replied Ben. "We want to catch him."

"What for, sa'b?"

"He stole something from us."

"Me seen him makin' tracks for village down dat way," said Kurhora, pointing.

"You help us catch him and we'll pay you well," said Clif.

"Me help. No like Salambo. Much big rascal."

"Lead the way then, and step lively," said Ben impatiently.

Stepping out lively was hot work for the boys, but under the circumstances they did not mind it so much, as their thoughts were centered in the stolen pearls.

"I'm breaking my word to Captain Glaze, but I guess we've a good excuse," said Clif as they hurried along toward the next village, which they could see in the distance.

"Oh, shoot Captain Glaze! I guess we can take care of ourselves," replied Ben.

"It's getting on to sundown. I hope this chase will end at yonder village."

"Suppose the rascal has gone on further? Are you going to follow him?"

"Yes," replied Clif doggedly. "I don't mean that he shall have the laugh on us, as well as the

profit of those pearls. The fellow would be made for the rest of his life."

"I'd like to fill him full of holes for giving us all this trouble," said Ben.

"He deserves some kind of punishment, but I'll be satisfied if I get the pearls back."

The perspiration was running off them when they reached the village. Kurhora led them hither and thither, making inquiries in the native tongue. Finally a man was found who knew Salambo. He furnished the unpalatable information that the shark-charmer had gone on to another village in the interior.

"Gee! That's bad," said Ben. "What shall we do about it?"

"Follow him," replied Clif tersely.

"He may have friends there who are likely to stand up for him, and we may get into all kinds of trouble," said Ben.

"I'm ready to chance that," replied Clif. "I can't afford to let that rascal get away with my property."

"It will be dark before we can get back to our boat, and later still when we reach the schooner. Captain Glaze will have fits over our absence. He won't let us come ashore alone any more."

"I don't care as long as I recover those pearls."

The promise of an additional rupee induced Kurhora to lead the way to the village Salambo was reported to have made for.

"I've an idea we'll catch him there, for he'll believe he has thrown us off his track," said Clif.

"I hope so," responded Ben.

A kind of roadway led to the village in question, and the three followed it. The boys were compelled to stop and rest several times as the heat told heavily on them. The guide didn't seem to mind it, but then he was accustomed to the climate. In the course of two hours, or about sundown, they reached the village. Clif decided that they would attract too much attention by showing themselves in the place, and this would put Salambo on his guard if he was there. Kurhora was therefore instructed to enter the village alone and investigate the whereabouts of the shark-charmer. If he succeeded in finding where the rascal had taken refuge he was to return at once and report to the boys.

"We'll wait at the foot of this tree till you get back," said Clif to the guide. "Understand?"

"Me understandin', sa'b," replied Kurhora, who then entered the village on his mission.

"Gee! We're having quite an adventure after all, Clif," said Ben, lying down on the grass and fanning his heated brow with his helmet.

"That's what we are. On the whole, I'm beginning to feel sorry that we found those pearls. It goes against my grain to lose them to that rascal above all others. I wonder how he knew we had them?"

"He must have seen us buy the oysters and then followed us, and hid himself in the grass under the banyan."

"How could he guess that we were likely to find pearls in those oysters? We didn't suspect the fact ourselves. Nobody could possibly tell what those oysters contained besides putrid meat until they were opened and inspected."

"Maybe he followed us to play some trick on us in revenge for yesterday afternoon's incident," said Ben.

"That's more like it. When he saw we had

found valuable pearls, particularly that gold one, he made up his mind to steal them and succeeded."

The boys gradually cooled off while awaiting their guide's return.

"It will soon be dark," said Ben. "Even if we started back at once it would take us about three hours to reach the place where we left our boat. I'll bet the skipper has sent Flint ashore by this time to look us up."

"A number of the natives of the village there saw us start for the other village with Kurhora, and that will give Flint, if he comes ashore after us, a clue to the direction we've taken," said Clif.

"Oh, what's the odds? We'll get back all right. Our guide knows it's money in his pocket to treat us right."

A noise behind them at that moment attracted their attention. Turning to look they were suddenly seized, each by a sinewy pair of arms, and thrown on their faces. In that position they were quickly bound by thongs and turned over again on their backs. Then they were raised into a sitting posture. They were so surprised by the attack made upon them, as well as taken at sudden disadvantage, that they were able to make but slight resistance in their own behalf. When they looked to see who their enemies were their eyes lighted on the very individual they were in quest of—the shark-charmer, Salambo, and there was a look of gratified malice on his crafty countenance that did not augur well for the future of the two boys.

CHAPTER V.—A Startling Occurrence

"How do you feel now, eh, sa'bs?" grinned Salambo, making a mock bow to them.

"What do you mean by treating us in this manner, you villain?" cried Clif angrily.

"S'pose you tell why make Salambo walk plank yesterday af'noon, eh?" he replied.

"That was only a joke. It didn't hurt you any."

"Salambo no see joke. S'pose shark come up, catch him, bite him in two. What then, eh?"

"You had a charm with you to protect yourself, didn't you?"

Salambo grinned unpleasantly. It was clear that he placed no great faith in his own charms.

"You play your joke, sa'b. Now Salambo play joke, too. How like dat?"

"Where are those pearls you stole from me, you rascal? You'd better hand them over or Captain Glaze will make it hot for you."

"No care for big sa'b. Me shore. Him on schooner."

"He'll send a party on shore to hunt you down."

"No find Salambo. Me go way long distance. No need sell more charm. Me well fixed. No work more. Live like prince."

"I see what you mean, you scoundrel. You intend to sell those pearls, and go to some other part of India to live."

"Sa'b make good guess. He heap wise boy," grinned the shark-charmer.

Clif considered the situation a moment or two.

"I tell you what I'll do with you," he said. "Hand over the white pearl and release us and you may keep the gold one."

"No good do dat," the rascal answered. "When me done wid sa'bs you do'nt need anyt'in'."

Salambo's remark sounded rather ominous. The boys wondered what his intentions were toward them. Did he mean to kill them in revenge for the fright their trick had given him? The outlook was certainly not a pleasant one. Salambo gave some directions to his comrades. A rude wagon was brought forward, in the shafts of which was a one-eyed, sorry-looking horse. The boys were shoved into it as though they were logs, two of the natives followed, while a third got on the seat, with the shark-charmer beside him, and started the horse ahead. The course they took skirted the village, and when they reached the other side they went on into the interior.

"This is a nice fix we're in now," said Clif to his friend, who lay stretched out beside him in the bottom of the wagon.

"I should say so," returned Ben. "If we don't see our finish we'll be lucky."

"I can't imagine what the old rascal means to do with us."

"He doesn't mean us any good, that's certain."

"He seems to hold all the cards in his hands."

"He's taken two tricks so far, and the next may finish the game."

"And us as well."

"I hope not, but things look pretty blue."

The wagon was a rickety affair, and the road full of ruts, so that the boys got an unpleasant shaking up during the ride. Ben growled every time he got a good bounce, and finally said that he was getting as sore all over as a healthy boil. It came on dark, but the sky was bright with numerous stars. Salambo and his companions talked among themselves in their native dialect, and the shark-charmer appeared to be in an excellent humor.

"No wonder," thought Clif, "when he's got the upper hand of us, as well as a fortune in pearls in his possession. It seems as if we've been riding hours in this wagon, and yet I see no indications of a stoppage for the night."

Another hour went by and the country grew wilder and more lonesome. The boys were not aware of this fact, as they couldn't see anything but the high wooden sides of the cart. By and by the moon rose, making the night a gorgeous one. Occasionally the wagon passed a solitary hut by the wayside. There were no signs of life about these dwellings, but they seemed to be inhabited. The cry of some wild animal could occasionally be heard in the distance, but otherwise the night was still. At length the wagon entered a wad and traveling for some distance came to a halt in a clearing. The natives jumped down and two of them began gathering the material for a fire. The fire was lighted and wood put on till it became quite a ruddy blaze. The boys could see its reflection on the leaves and branches of the trees. Salambo and his gang gathered about the fire and produced some food from the folds of the cloth about their waists.

This they ate leisurely, carrying on an animated conversation all the while. No attention was paid to the boys in the wagon.

"I wonder if we're going to stay here all night?" said Clif.

"I wouldn't be surprised. I'm pretty hungry, do you know? I wish we were on board the schooner."

"You don't wish it any more than I do," replied Clif. We made a mistake in chasing Salambo. It might be bad enough to lose those pearls, but they didn't cost anything worth mentioning. It would be a great sight worse if we lost our lives. These chaps could put us out of the way and bury us in this wood so that our parents would never get the slightest clue as to our fate." Ben didn't feel easy over his companion's suggestion.

Salambo's words that when he was done with them they wouldn't need anything, and the fact that they were wholly at the rascal's mercy, furnished the boy with unpleasant food for thought. After Salambo and his companions had finished their *al fresco* meal the fire was replenished. The shark-charmer and two of the natives lay down to rest while the fourth sat upon watch.

The boys lay awake for hours, tortured by anxiety and hunger, and then fell into an uneasy slumber. They awoke at intervals during the night to find no change in the situation. The fire continued to burn brightly, and the natives took turns in watching the encampment. The moon went down and finally morning dawned. Soon afterwards all hinds were astir and the journey was resumed without any particular attention being paid to the prisoners. After an hour's travel the wagon came to a stop before a native hut.

Salambo interviewed the Hindoo who lived there and secured some provisions of a simple kind. A portion of this was allotted to Clif and Ben, and they were partially unbound and told to eat. They were very glad to do so, though the food was not particularly to their liking. They ate the cakes and drank the sweetened water with a relish and were then tied again. Salambo and his bunch ate their breakfast, then the horse and cart were started on again. Then fact that they were still alive when Salambo had such an excellent chance to put them out of the way during the preceding night somewhat revived the drooping spirits of the boys.

"I guess he doesn't intend to kill us," Clif said to his friend as the cart jogged along across the country; "but I'd give something to know where the rascal is taking us, and why he is carrying us so far away from the coast."

"It wouldn't do us any good to know," returned Ben. "He's bent on getting square with us in some measly way. I wouldn't be surprised if he intends to leave us in some far-away and secluded place to starve to death, or maybe hand us over to a band of thugs to be strangled." The latter suggestion sent a shiver through Clif. Both he and Ben had read enough about the murderous fraternity to fear contact with the.

While it was true these religious scoundrels were not near so numerous in India as they had once been, there were still enough of them scattered around the country to make the name feared. Murder for plunder was their trade, and they lived chiefly upon the property obtained from their victims, who were invariably strangled by a rope or cloth at a moment when they were off their guard.

"Can't you think of something pleasant instead of bringing up such a subject as that?" asked Clif.

"The idea occurred to my mind, and I couldn't help mentioning it," answered Ben gloomily.

Clif did not reply, and the boys remained silent for some time, during which the cart continued on its way at the same old pace. Along about noon a stop was made at another solitary habitation. Here more food was obtained, and the boys received a share as before. The meal, however, was not eaten near the dwelling, but in a lonesome spot a mile distant where the party rested for perhaps an hour when the journey was renewed.

"Captain Glaze is in a big stew over us by this time," said Clif.

"I'll bet he is."

"I'll wager he has several parties out scouring the country."

"Probably Salambo has a pretty good idea of what course the captain would pursue as soon as we were missed, and that is why he is carrying us so far inland."

"I wish we could get our hands loose. We could make it mighty hot for these rascals with our revolvers. It's a wonder they didn't search us when they captured us."

"Salambo couldn't have considered us worth searching."

"He'd have found a fine gold watch on you if he had, and some rupees on both of us."

"Probably he'll search us later on when we reach our destination."

"Kurahora is bound to report that we disappeared on the outskirts of that village he piloted us to. Don't you think that the captain will send a search party into the interior after us?"

"There is little doubt that he will. The question is, will he hit the direction Salambo has taken?"

"I'm afraid his attempt to find us will be like hunting for a needle in a haystack. India is a big country, and there are jungles and other lonesome places to burn in it. Flint said a jungle was little better than a labyrinth, and I'm willing to believe him, though I never was in one."

"Captain Glaze will leave no stone unturned to find us," said Clif hopefully. "He'll employ the most experienced guides he can find. He can't afford to return to Madras and report to my father that we have disappeared until he has exhausted every possible effort to find us."

"There isn't much doubt of that, but he has a mighty foxy old rascal to deal with. Salambo owes him a grudge, anyway, for the whipping he got last season. It will give him a whole lot of satisfaction to make the captain as much trouble as possible."

The boys continued to talk off and on during the whole of the long afternoon while the cart jolted along without a stop. The half-blind nag seemed possessed of a wonderful fund of vitality to keep the pace up so steadily, though it was true he went at no great speed. No doubt he was accustomed to traveling for indefinite periods around the country, and took the present trip as a matter of course.

Apparently Salambo avoided the beaten track and kept at a distance from the scattered villages, for as far as the boys were aware the party met with no one except the residents of the out-of-the-way huts at which they had stopped to procure food. They stopped at another of

these dwellings just before sunset, got more food, and went on to a secluded spot to eat it. This kind of provender was not at all to the boys' liking. They were not used to it, besides their portion was very scanty, anyway, so that they felt half starved by this time.

It was just dark when the party entered the gloomy precincts of a dense jungle. For an hour the cart continued on its way and then a halt was called at an open space where a fire was lighted and preparations made to pass the night as the previous one had been spent. Hardly was the fire under way when a blood-curdling screech awoke the silence of the glade. Something struck the cart with such force that it toppled over on one side, dumping the boys out toward the fire.

"Good, Lord!" cried Clif, as his eyes roved back to the cart. "It's a tiger!"

It was a tiger, and a big one. It carried consternation to Salambo and his associates. Pretty soon, to the dismay of all hands, the tiger pounced upon one of the natives and seized him in his mouth and walked off with him. All during the night animals of all kinds prowled around the camp, and the boys were glad when dawn appeared.

CHAPTER VI.—In the Grasp of Sure Death.

Daylight came soon after Clif went on watch for the third time, and he crawled out from under the cart and looked around it was a strange scene that met his eyes. They were evidently in the midst of a dense tropical looking forest, and Clif at once decided that it was an Indian jungle. At any rate it corresponded with descriptions of jungles he had read about in books.

"Perhaps it's the very jungle that Flint and his party were last in. In that case Ben and I may happen to run across the temple of Jumna, where the god is that wears the famous big blue stone on his stomach. Gee! But I'd give a whole lot and take some risk to be able to say that I saw that god and the big blue stone face to face. It would be a big feather in our caps, bet your life. Hello! What's this?" Clif stooped and picked up a small bundle.

"By George! If it isn't my handkerchief, and I'll bet the pearls are inside. Salambo must have lost it last night when he skipped out in such a hurry. Gee! This is great luck!"

He hastily unknotted the handkerchief and, as he anticipated, there was the chamois bag with the silver pearl and the gold one. Clif was tickled to death. He was so overjoyed that he rushed over to the wagon, awoke Ben and showed him the recovered pearls.

"Where did you find them?" asked Ben, highly pleased.

"By the dead embers of the fire."

"We haven't done so bad after all."

"Not if we can get out of the jungle alive."

"Are we in a jungle?" asked Ben in surprise.

"Looks like one. Doesn't it seem so to you? Take a look around." Ben admitted that they were in a jungle as far as he could see.

"We're not very far in it," he said. "We had

not reached it when Salambo stopped to get something to eat last night about sunset."

"How do you know we weren't in it then?"

"Because there weren't so many trees around and above us as there are now. We could see that much from the bottom of the cart."

"We could see precious little from the bottom of the cart except the sky," said Clif.

"Say, I think we'd better get away from here soon. Salambo will be back here looking for those pearls, you can gamble on it."

"There isn't any doubt of it he wasn't gobbled up by some wild beast last night."

"No such luck. Those kind of chaps always light on their feet like a cat, and they have just as many lives. Where's the horse? Up Salt Creek?"

"Yes. He lies yonder half eaten. Some animal put him out of business."

"I heard him screech during the night, and thought he was in for it. Well, the cart is no good to us now. We'll have to do our traveling on foot."

"I don't mind, if we can reach the coast all right."

"I'd rather reach a restaurant or a hotel first," said Ben with a sickly grin. "My stomach feels awfully empty."

"It's likely to remain so for awhile, I'm afraid. I don't see any indications of breakfast coming our way."

"Well, what direction shall we go in? That's a very important point. If we take the wrong one——"

"The sun rises in the east, doesn't it?"

"That's what my geography said."

"The coast lies to the east. If we aim in the direction of the rising sun we ought to reach some part of the coast in time. I don't know any better course to follow."

"Go ahead, then, and I'll follow. Whatever you say goes with me."

"Then I'm the leader of this expedition?"

"You are. You're elected by unanimous vote."

"Then come on." The boys started off in the direction of the glow of the rising sun and were soon threading their way through the jungle.

"Say Ben," said Clif, "how would you like to run across the temple of Jumna—where the idol is with the big blue stone?"

"Tip top; but I'd rather run across a square meal first."

"Same here, but I wouldn't mind whether it was square, round or oblong, so long as it was a meal."

"Say, what the deuce is that thing yonder?" said Ben, pointing at an object showing above the grass on their right.

"As I'm not a mind reader or an Indian fakir I couldn't tell you. We'll go over and find out."

"Why, it's a pair of saddle bags!" exclaimed Ben, as they drew near it.

"So it is, and a modern one, too. I wonder what it's doing here?" said Clif.

"Hello! Here's a fine rifle and a cartridge belt lying alongside of it. This must be our lucky day, Clif." Ben picked up the gun, which bore the name of a noted English manufacturer and slung the belt around his waist.

"If Salambo monkeys with us now I'll make him eat lead," he said. Clif hauled the saddle-

bags toward him and began to investigate the pockets. The first thing he brought to light was a flask of brandy, with a Bombay trademark. Then out came several small packages. Opening one of them, Clif's eyes glistened as he saw that it contained some sandwiches made of meat and bread.

"Howling dervishes!" ejaculated Ben. "Grub?"

"That's what it is. Take one and get busy," said Clif, flopping down on the grass and digging his teeth into a sandwich.

"Gosh! But this tastes good," mumbled Ben, with his mouth full.

"Don't choke yourself, old man." There were four of the sandwiches, and they disappeared in an incredibly short time.

"I wish I had a drink," said Ben. "If that brandy was only water, or even a light wine, I'd tackle it." An investigation of the second saddle-bag resulted in the discovery of two flasks of soda. The boys finished one of them between them.

"I feel like a fighting cock, b'gee!" said Ben, throwing out his chest. "I could eat a whole lot more, thought."

"We can't afford to eat everything up at once. I'll carry these saddle-bags while you wrestle with the rifle," said Clif.

"Some English traveler owned this rifle and those bags," said Ben. "Something must have happened to him, for he wouldn't have voluntarily abandoned them."

"Yes, it is very odd that we should find them here in the jungle," replied Clif. "It was a fortunate thing for us that we found the saddle-bags, at any rate. Might be the means of saving us from starvation."

"Those sandwiches did us a whole lot of good, bet your life," nodded Ben. "I felt as empty as a bag of wind."

"That rifle ought to come in very handy, Ben," said Clif. "We should be able to shoot some game that we can cook and eat on our way to the coast."

"Great idea," said Ben. "What game are we likely to find? Elephants?"

"Don't be funny. We'll find monkeys, for one thing."

"Oh, Lord! I couldn't eat a monkey."

"How do you know you couldn't if you were hungry enough?"

"I'd sooner shoot birds."

"Well, we'll shoot anything that looks good enough to eat when cooked."

After that Ben kept his weather eye lifting for some kind of game. He saw plenty of monkeys, but he wouldn't throw a cartridge away on one. Finally he wounded a bird of gay plumage that looked something like a quail in size and build. Putting a fresh cartridge in the rifle he tossed the gun to Clif and then dashed into the underbush after the wounded bird.

Why he paused to put that cartridge in the gun he never could explain afterward, but if he had not done it, it is probable he never would have left the jungle alive. Clif heard him beating around among the luxuriant vegetation in his efforts to locate the bird. Several minutes passed, and then Clif heard his companion give a cry of terror, and immediately afterward he

began shouting for help in a tone that showed something serious had happened to him.

Clif lost not a moment in hurrying to his assistance. Ben's cries continued and directed his friend to the spot where he appeared to be making a desperate struggle with some denizen of the jungle. It took but a brief time to reach the scene of the trouble, and then a sight met his gaze that fairly staggered him. Ben was in the grasp of a huge boa constrictor, which was trying to get its tail around a big tree in order to secure the necessary purchase to squeeze its victim into a pulp.

CHAPTER VII.—Saved.

Clif uttered a gasp of consternation and then woke up to the necessity for instant action if Ben's life was to be saved. The unfortunate boy's cries suddenly ceased. The horror and apparent hopelessness of his situation had proved too much for him, and he relapsed into unconsciousness.

The noise made by Clif attracted the notice of the huge snake, and suspecting the presence of an enemy it stopped its movements and held up its hideous looking head in a wary manner. Instantly Clif sank on one knee, took careful aim at one of the gleaming eyes and fired. The ball went straight through the serpent's eye and brain, and the great reptile began to thresh the verdure of the jungle in its death struggles. Its winding folds held Ben in a close embrace, and the boy was rolled around and swung from side to side, while the snake's body whipped itself about like a live electric wire on a rampage.

Clif could do nothing further to finish the boa constrictor. The serpent was practically dead, for its head followed the movements of the body in a limp and aimless fashion. The vitality of the reptile, however, was great, and therein lay Ben's peril. It loosened and then tightened its folds spasmodically, but Ben's arms being pressed against his body saved his ribs from fracture. Had the snake got a firm grip on a tree before he was shot Clif's chum would in all probability have been squeezed to death.

Gradually the serpent's struggle grew less violent, and Clif, seeing his chance got out his jackknife, and rushing forward began hacking away at its body where it encircled his friend. He had the time of his life trying to make headway, though his knife was sharp, but as he cut partly through one fold after another of the three the strain on Ben was eased up till Clif was finally able to release him from his terrible position.

As Clif dragged Ben back to the spot where the saddle-bags lay the boy looked like death. Clif was in a fever of anxious suspense over his companion's predicament. Ben's white face, closed eyes, and inert condition was far from reassuring. Clif fished the flask of brandy out of the compartment of one of the saddle-bags and forcing open Ben's mouth poured some of it down his throat.

No immediate result followed, and so Clif started in to bathe his friend's face and forehead with the cognac. Many minutes passed before Clif's heart was gladdened by a faint sigh from Ben's

lips. This encouraged him to persevere in his treatment. A second dram administered to the insensible boy brought on a spasmodic fit of coughing, at the end of which Ben opened his eyes.

"How do you feel, old man?" asked Clif eagerly.

Ben looked up into his face in a dazed way that showed he did not realize the situation. After a moment or two Clif repeated the question. Ben tried to raise himself, but fell back on the grass. He was dizzy and weak, and it was some little time before he remembered what had happened to him. Then he shuddered and uttered a frightened cry.

"The snake! The snake!" he palpitated.

"Out of business," replied Clif coolly.

"Out of——"

"Dead."

"Dead?"

"As a coffin nail."

"How——"

"I shot it."

"You shot——"

"Exactly. Through the head. Had I missed——"

Ben stared at him.

"Had I missed," repeated Clif, "I'm afraid I could not have saved you. I never saw but one other serpent like that and it was a dopy looking thing in the Greatest Show on Earth at the Madison Square Garden two years ago. This one was a holy terror to look at in his native wilds. To tell you the truth, old chap, I don't know how you escaped. I wouldn't take a million dollars and run the risk you did."

Ben shuddered again.

"It was awful," he whispered in a weak tone.

"I believe you. I hope we won't meet another. One is enough to frighten a year's growth out of a chap. How did you run foul of it?"

"It was coiled up among the bushes, and I stepped right on it when searching for that bird."

"And then——"

"It was around me before I could get out of its reach. The squeeze it gave me was something I sha'n't forget in a hurry. I could feel my bones almost crack."

"If it had got a hold on one of the trees you'd have understood how it feels to get between the jaws of a closing vise. Your ribs would have folded up like so much paper, and you would have been a fit subject for an undertaker."

"Don't talk about it any more. I'll see that snake in my sleep for a month."

"I wouldn't be surprised. How do you feel now?"

"Pretty good, but awful sore about my chest and arms."

"Are you able to go on a bit?"

"Help me up, and I will make a bluff at it if I can't do any better."

"Take another mouthful of the brandy. It will brace you up."

"Gee! But I feel as weak as a cat," said Ben with a rueful smile as Clif assisted him on his feet and he attempted to walk unaided. "I'll come around all right in a little while."

Clif threw the saddle-bags over his shoulder again and picked up the rifle.

"Where's my helmet?" asked Ben.

"Lord, where are my eyes? I never noticed that you didn't have it on," replied Clif. "I must

be getting dopey. I guess your helmet is in the bushes where the dead snake is."

He threw down the bags and the rifle and went to hunt up his friend's headgear. As he approached the spot where the dead snake lay he heard a chattering going on. Not knowing exactly what it meant he advanced with some caution. When he reached the edge of the spot a comical sight met his view. Four monkeys—father, mother, and two youngsters, were amusing themselves with Ben's helmet.

The one Clif took for the mother, because it was a little smaller than the largest, had the helmet on her head. Being much too large for her it hid her head and shoulders from view, and she was making desperate efforts to escape from it. She was balked in this by the two little ones, who, seemingly impressed by the idea that their parent was lost in the helmet, were searching for her on the outside of it, sitting on top of it and feeling all over it, with such a series of grimaces and chatterings that Clif couldn't help laughing heartily at the odd sight.

The old chap made no effort to relieve his embarrassed spouse, but sat at one side scratching his tail and grinning like a fiend, as if he were greatly tickled at his wife's dilemma and her frantic contortions to get rid of the helmet. Finally the female monk got out of the helmet, and seizing the article in both hands flung it in the direction that Clif stood. He stooped and picked it up.

When he straightened up the four monkeys had retreated to a near-by tree and were making all kinds of grimaces at him. Clif laughed again and returned to Ben, whom he regaled with the monkey incident.

"It was the funniest thing I ever saw in my life," he said, chuckling at the recollection.

Ben said he wished he had been a spectator also. He was feeling greatly improved, and so they resumed their way through the jungle.

CHAPTER VIII.—In the Grip of a Thug.

They got on by slow stages during the morning, but Ben gradually improved, and when they stopped to eat some more of the rations in the bag he declared he felt almost as well as ever, barring a soreness of the ribs. In the afternoon they struck a kind of trail through the jungle, and they decided to follow it, though it took them a bit off their course.

"This path may lead us right out of the jungle," said Clif.

"We can't get out any too quick to suit me," replied Ben.

"Or it might guide us straight to the temple Jumna, where the idol is with the great blue stone," suggested Clif. "Do you know, I'm awfully curious to see that stone."

"So am I. It would be great if we could capture it and take it home with us," said Ben with sparkling eyes.

"Not much chance of our doing that, according to Flint's statement of the case."

"Flint be jiggered!" snorted Ben. "It's my opinion that he laid a whole lot of bluff on that yarn. I don't believe he and his crowd were in half the danger he asserted. If it really is a fact

that foreigners are not permitted to enter the temple he and his friends would never have got back alive. I'm satisfied that he was joshing us, with the idea of making himself out as some pumpkins."

"That might be so," admitted Clif. "Sailors like to spin tough yarns."

"He's treated us to some hard ones, all right. You remember that one about the grizzled mariner he said his ship met crossing the Indian Ocean on a hen-coop?"

"Do I? I should smile! He told that yarn as solemnly as if it were gospel truth. I wonder if he really expected us to swallow such a lie?"

"Sure he did. He said he saw that sailor and that hen-coop as plain as he saw us while he was telling the story. The captain hailed the chap and asked him how long he'd been knocking about on that craft."

"And the fellow replied six weeks," grinned Clif, "at the same time claiming that he felt as jolly as a sand-boy, whatever that is."

"He refused to be picked up, saying he expected to make the coast of Java in a month. When the captain asked him what he lived on he pointed at three hens in the coop and remarked that he had fresh eggs every morning, at the same time tossing a couple up to the skipper to prove the fact. If Flint can get off such a yarn as that we are justified in taking his story about the risk he and his friends ran in the temple of Jumna with a large grain of salt."

"I guess so. If we run across that temple, I, for one, am going to see the big sapphire eye that winks once a year."

"That's another yarn as bad as Flint's."

"I reckon it is."

The boys followed the trail until they reached a clearing about sundown.

"We'd better camp here for the night," said Clif. "I don't see any chance of our getting out of this jungle before dark."

"I'm willing," agreed Ben.

"You can see it has been used as a camping-ground by somebody, for there are the ashes of several fires."

Clif threw down the saddle bags in the center of the clearing, and then both he and Ben started to gather a bountiful supply of fuel to make a couple of fires for the purpose of keeping at bay the tigers, hyenas, jackals, leopards, and other beasts that made night vocal with their cries and preyed upon the unwary.

While thus engaged Clif discovered a wild turkey perched on a neighboring tree. The bird fell a victim to his accurate aim.

"How shall we cook it?" asked Ben. "Roast him on a spit?"

"We haven't any spit. We'll cook it gypsy fashion."

"How is that?"

"Cover it, feathers and all, in a casing of mud. Then dig a hole, fill it with hot embers, placing the bird on top of them, and cover all well with dry earth."

"Who showed you how to cook that way?"

"Nobody. I read it in a story book."

"Where are you going to get the mud?"

"There's a rivulet of fresh water yonder. We can get all the mud we want there."

"Well, you can boss the job. I'll devote my

energies to making a fire and digging the hole," replied Ben.

Clif carried the turkey to the little stream and soon had a thick coating of mud around it. By that time the fire was burning in fine shape and Ben was just finishing the hole. In the course of time the dinner was cooked to a turn. The feathers came off clean, and then an incision in the abdomen got rid of the entrails.

"Gee! This is bang-up," said Ben as he began on a drumstick. "It knocks spots out of some turkeys I've eaten at home. Who'd have thought it could be cooked so fine in such primitive style?"

"It takes the gypsies to do things up brown in the cooking line," replied Clif.

"It's a fine thing to know when a fellow goes out camping with a friend or two in the woods."

"It's beginning to get dark. We must replenish the fire and get a second ready to light. I hope they will protect us against the beasts of prey. You haven't forgotten what we heard last night at the other camping spot."

"Bet your life I haven't. I'm sorry we haven't the cart here. It was as good as a fort."

"I've heard it said that even tigers have a strong objection to venturing too close to a fire. One of us must keep awake at a time to keep the fires going."

Darkness, as usual in tropical countries, came on quite suddenly. The second fire was lighted, and Clif, after a survey of the fuel remaining, decided to get some more before the wild animals began to get busy. He started off into the bushes, keeping a sharp eye out for a possible snake. Hardly had he departed before a dusky form appeared at the opposite edge of the clearing. Ben had lain down to rest himself, and from all indications he seemed to be asleep. The dark figure worked around till Ben's back was toward him, then he began crawling out toward the boy.

He made his way so noiselessly across the dry grass that Ben was not cognizant of his stealthy approach. At last he got quite close to the recumbent boy, who by that time had grown drowsy between the heat of the fires and the climate, added to the fatigue of the day and the rough handling he had received from the boa constrictor. The intruder listened carefully to Ben's breathing. Satisfied that the boy was asleep he came closer still till he actually bent over him.

"A white boy and alone in the jungle," he muttered in Hindoostance. "He will do as well as another to fulfill my vow to Kali."

Those words proclaimed the man to be a thug. Why he was alone was not apparent. It was probable that he had friends at no great distance. To discover a lone white boy in the clearing was a great surprise to him, but as he needed a victim to propitiate the goddess he served in common with his fanatical sect he greeted the stranger's presence with extreme satisfaction. Indeed, his superstitious mind actually conceived the idea that Kali had herself provided the victim that he might lose no more time in making the sacrifice.

Slowly and cautiously he drew from about his waist the piece of cloth provided for the purpose of strangling his victim. Men's posture prevented him from using it as effectively as he wished, so he proceeded to arouse the boy and frighten him with the hiss of a snake. This procedure was frequently adopted by the thugs as a preliminary to the actual strangulation, which followed almost

immediately while the victim was somewhat dazed by being suddenly awakened.

Ben started into wakefulness with more alertness than the thug had bargained for, but he was not to be deterred from his murderous act on that account.

"Hello! Who are you?" demanded Ben, not relishing the wicked look reflected by the fire in the fellow's eyes.

"Look out! Snake! Snake!" cried the thug in Hindoo language.

Ben didn't understand his meaning, but he followed the direction that the rascal pointed. That was what the thug wanted. With a swift movement, born of long experience, he whisked the cloth around Ben's neck and drew it tight. The boy struggled violently, but the villain had him at a disadvantage. It would have been all up with Ben in a few seconds but for the fact that at that crucial moment Clif issued from the shrubbery with an armful of wood. He saw the thug bending over his companion and Ben struggling in his grip.

He dropped the wood, drew his revolver and sprang forward. He fired straight at the black face that looked strange and uncanny in the glow of the fire. With a cry of agony the thug fell back, writhed for a moment on the grass and then lay still.

CHAPTER IX.—Clif and Ben Meet With an Adept and Get Evidence of Occult Forces.

Clif sprang forward as Ben tore the cloth from his neck and gasped for breath. He looked down at the native. He was not dead by any means, as the ball had not entered his brain, but had glanced off his thick skull.

"What was he doing to you, Ben?" Clif inquired.

"Trying to choke me with that cloth."

"What! A thug?"

"Gess! That's what he must be," replied Ben. "I was dozing here waiting for you to get back, when I felt a hand on my shoulder. I started up and saw the fellow's villainous countenance peering into mine. I think his eyes were worse than Salambo's, and that's saying a good deal. He said something in his outlandish language and pointed at the grass beyond this fire. When I looked to see what he was getting at he put the cloth around my neck and started to choke me with it. If you hadn't shot him he'd have done me up. Is he dead?"

"No. He's breathing."

"He deserves to be finished. He meant to murder me, all right."

"I'm not sorry I didn't kill him, bad as he is. I'm not anxious to have human blood on my hands."

"Self-defense is the first law of nature, Clif. If we let him get away he may hang around and creep upon us later on. He's like a snake in the grass."

"There's a strag in that bag. We'll tie his hands behind him," said Clif.

"You'd better lose no time doing it, then," said Ben.

Clif at once tied the thug's arms securely and left him just outside one of the fires. Then they drew lots to see who would watch first. That

duty fell to Ben. Clif had been asleep perhaps thirty minutes when he was awakened by a shriek.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated. "What was that?"

"Some beast crept up and nabbed the thug," said Ben in a tremor of excitement.

"What! In spite of the fire?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you shoot?"

"Couldn't if I'd wanted to. I didn't see the animal till he had the rascal and was dragging him away. Serves the chap right. We're well rid of him."

The air was full of animal cries, and the boys could see glaring eyes circling in the darkness around the edge of the clearing. Clif seized the rifle and fired directly at a pair of fiery orbs. A snarling whine followed, then a rush of other animals to the spot, a tussle in the gloom of the jungle, growls, yelps and other hideous sounds, and after that a temporary silence.

"You killed or wounded some beast and the rest of the prowlers have made short work of his body," said Ben. "I'll bet there isn't much left of him now."

The night passed in constant alarm, and the boys were glad when daylight drove the beasts back to their lairs. After a good breakfast of the remains of the turkey and a drink of water from the stream they proceeded onward, still following the trail. Once more midday overtook them still in the jungle.

They made a meal off the rest of the provender in the saddle-bags and finished the soda. They still had a good part of the brandy and one of the soda water bottles filled with water they had taken from the rivulet that morning.

"No use carrying these bags any further," said Clif. "They're a nuisance. The stuff that's in them is of little value to us."

Accordingly when they moved on again the bags were left hanging on a low branch of a tree for some wandering native to appropriate if he saw fit. An hour later the boys saw a cave a short distance from the trail.

"Let's go over and see what it looks like inside," suggested Ben.

Clif had no objection. As they drew near the place the entrance was suddenly filled by a medium-sized old man of dark skin, with a weird and uncanny look.

"Welcome, sa'bs," he said in good English. "I've been expecting you. Enter my habitation, where you may rest and refresh yourselves. It is written that I am to offer hospitality to two young sa'bs lately from America."

Clif looked at Ben in some astonishment and his friend returned his gaze. How was it possible for this old man to know that they were coming that way; and, more wonderful still, how did he learn that they were fresh from the United States? They regarded him with awe and some little trepidation.

"Be not alarmed, young sa'bs. I am Feringeea, the Mahatma. I have reached that degree of enlightenment that has placed me on the spiritual plane. What is hidden from those of material mold is as plain to me as the sunlight. Enter and you shall behold much that is not often accorded to mortal eyes."

As if impelled by some power they could not resist the boys followed the adept into the cave. The

Mahatma led the way into an inner cavern of some size, and as soon as Clif and Ben were able to distinguish objects they saw, to their consternation, that the place was peopled by a collection of snakes, birds and a tiger.

"Keep close to me and be not afraid," said the Hindoo.

He took a brass vessel from a stone shelf and sprinkled a portion of its contents about. He also took down a long staff and placed it across the cavern. The effect astonished the boys. The reptiles recoiled from the spot as if in great fear. The tiger receded to the darkest corner and crouched against the wall. The birds flew as high as they could go and perched about in various nooks in the rocky walls.

"You are perfectly safe as long as you do not pass across that staff," said the strange man in soft tones. "Be not disturbed by any sights or sounds that may appear to be incomprehensible to you. My power is absolute over all living and inanimate objects. This power I have acquired by a lifetime of self-denial and contemplation."

"You say you were expecting us?" said Clif. "How did you know we were coming this way?"

"By the power I possess. You were brought to the jungle by a man who is a great rascal."

"That isn't any lie," replied Clif in surprise.

"He intended to turn you both over to a society of phansigars, who would have murdered and robbed you."

"Phansigars!" exclaimed Clif.

"You know them as thugs."

"Ah!" said the boy.

"I saved you."

"You."

"I sent the tiger you see yonder to scatter the man and his companions."

"Gracious!"

"The saddle-bags and rifle I placed in your way for your sustenance and protection."

Ben gasped and looked at the Mahatma.

"Had you not shot and wounded one of the sacred birds of India you would have come hither unmolested. Had you killed the bird," he continued, looking at Ben, "your death by the serpent would have been certain. As it is you were punished for the sacrilege."

"You seem to know all we've gone through," said Clif.

"I do. You wish further evidence of my power?" asked the adept, fixing the boy with his dark, liquid eyes.

"I don't know," replied Clif hesitatingly.

"At this moment there is an adept talking to your father in his office at Madras," said the Mahatma.

"There is?"

"He is asking him to send you a brief message." Clif had his doubts about that.

"That message will reach me in a few minutes," said the man solemnly.

Clif and Ben looked at each other in some incredulity.

"I see you doubt it. Be silent and wait."

As the Mahatma spoke he grew rigid and his eyes assumed a stony stare, like one in a trance. The boys regarded him with growing fear, as the light from the suspended brazier fell upon his dark, set countenance. They asked themselves what was going to happen, and did not dare break

the injunction of the adept to remain silent. Not a sound broke the stillness of the cavern.

Not even a move from the reptiles, the birds and the tiger, all of whom seemed to be carved in stone. It was a thrilling moment for the boys, and one they never forgot. Suddenly the man's features and limbs relaxed. He was himself again.

"It is coming," he said in solemn tones.

As the boys gazed at him spellbound something white fluttered into his lap. The Mahatma picked it up and handed it to Clif.

"Open," he said laconically.

Clif obeyed the injunction. This is what he read in his father's well-known hand-writing:

"CONSULATE OFFICE, MADRAS, 3 P. M., July 20.

"MY DEAR BOY: Your mother and I are quite well and eagerly awaiting your return. I write this at the request of a religious enthusiast known in this country as an adept. He says he will see that you get it. It will no doubt be easy for him to send it down the coast to the schooner, as the natives will do anything for these men. Hoping it will come to hand all right, I will close with a God bless you, and the wish for your speedy return.

"Your affectionate father,
"GEORGE HALLIDAY."

Clif uttered a gasp of amazement. There was no getting away from the fact that this was his father's handwriting. A brief mental retrospect told him that this day was July 22. Mechanically he pulled out his watch. The time indicated, according to his own guess-work setting two nights before as he sat under the cart after the breaking up of Salambo's party by the tiger, was 3:30.

It was probably at least half an hour out of the way, one way or the other. Here was a note written by his father in his office at Madras two days previous and the distance between the cave and the town was—well, he did not know, but it was more than 100 miles, he could swear to that. By that kind of hocus pocus had that note come to his hand?

Clearly here seemed proof of the occult powers claimed by the adepts of India. But the real fact was that this fakir had stolen the note from a messenger who was carrying it to the ship, and learning who the boys were he had been trying to mystify them.

"Are you satisfied?" asked the Mahatma.

Ere Clif could reply a succession of piercing shrieks penetrated the cave from the outside.

CHAPTER X.—The Rescue of Elise Holt.

The screams came from a female in evident distress, and the natural American chivalry of Clif and Ben toward the weaker sex caused them to involuntarily spring to their feet and make a dash for the outside. In his hurry Ben forgot his rifle. Clif reached the open air first, and saw a young and lovely white girl struggling in the arms of a powerful Hindoo. Her cries of distress filled the air, and her unhappy predicament appealed at once to the plucky boy.

Dashing forward he struck the Hindoo a heavy blow in the face that dislodged his turban and

caused a part of it to fall over his eyes. Partly releasing the girl he grasped the cloth to raise it from his eyes so that he could make out who his assailant was, at the same time uttering maledictions in Hindoostanee that Clif did not understand nor care for.

"Save me! Save me!" cried the girl frantically, in English.

Clif gave the native another staggering blow and tore the girl from his grasp. The Hindoo pulled the cloth from his face and glared at his young aggressor.

He was evidently astonished to see two white boys before him. That fact, however, did not deter him from seeking to recover the girl, who was now clinging to Clif as hard as she could and begging him to protect her.

"Don't fear, I'll protect you," replied Clif.

The Hindoo drew a long knife from a sheath in his waistband and advanced menacingly on Clif.

"Stand back or I'll shoot you full of holes!" cried Ben covering the man with his revolver.

The native may not have understood his words, but the pointed weapon was an object lesson he was too prudent to disregard. He muttered some threatening words and pointed at the girl.

"Take her into the cave, Clif," said Ben. "I'll keep this fellow at bay."

Clif took the hint and carried the girl into the outer cave. At that moment he heard the crack of Ben's revolver, and a moment after Ben made his appearance.

"What did you do—shoot the man?" asked Clif.

"I chased him away. Where is the fakir?"

"In the inner cave, I suppose. I haven't seen him. Cheer up, miss, I guess you're safe enough now."

The girl gradually stilled her hysterical sobs and finally took her arms from around Clif's neck.

"Thank you, ah, thank you for saving me from that man," she said gratefully.

"Don't mention it. You're welcome. What's your name, miss? And how is it you are out in this jungle?"

"My name is Elise Holt. I am English. My father is consul-general at Bombay. We live on the suburbs of the city. One night a week ago I was in our garden quite alone, looking at the new moon. Two natives came upon me suddenly from behind, and stifling my cries, hurried me to a palanquin outside. I fainted in their arms, and when I came to myself I was being carried through a mountain pass many miles from my home. My screams caused the men to stop and one of them came to me and threatened me with a knife unless I kept quiet. I was terrified by his action and did not dare utter another sound. I recognized him as a servant whom father had discharged a short time before. They carried me all night through the mountains. In the morning they stopped at a hut where I was put in charge of a Hindoo woman. That night I was removed further into the interior to another dwelling. This continued for four days. Then we remained all night at a house and entered this jungle in the morning. We have been traveling two days in it, resting last night in a clearing where I couldn't sleep on account of the wild beasts that frightened me. Awhile ago when the men were resting I escaped from the palanquin, thinking I could

find a place of refuge. Anything was better than the fate designed for me by that man."

"What fate was it?"

"He intended to take me to the temple of Jumna and marry me."

"How did you know that?"

"I heard the man explain his plans to his companion."

"Then you understand the Hindoo language?"

"Almost perfectly," the girl replied.

"You have been some time in India, then?"

"Since I was a little girl. You will take me back to my parents, won't you?" she said pleadingly.

"I'll take you to Madras, where my father is the American consul. That is the best I can do, Miss Holt."

"You are American?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Clifford Halliday, and this my friend, Ben Wade."

Ben nodded and the girl smiled at him.

"Your father will return me to Bombay, I am sure," she said.

"He'll see that you get there. My mother is in Madras, too, and you shall remain with us until my father communicates with your folks."

"Thank you. I am very grateful to you, Mr. Halliday. I'll never forget what I owe you, nor how brave you were to attack that big native and take me from him. Oh, I should have died had he taken me to the temple."

"The temple of Jumna is in this jungle, is it?"

"It is."

"How far from here?"

"Five miles."

"Does that path outside lead to it?"

"It does."

"Ben and I thought of going there."

"You must not."

"Why not? We want to see the idol and the great blue stone."

"The Treasure of the Jungle!" she exclaimed with a look of fear. "You would not be permitted to see it. No foreigner is allowed to enter the temple."

"I know several who did it," said Clif.

The girl shook her head.

"No foreigner who may have entered that temple has lived to tell the story."

"That's where you're wrong, Miss Holt. A sailor named Flint, attached to a schooner in the Ceylon pearl fishery trade, was in that temple with three companions. He described the idol and the big blue stone fully to us."

The girl seemed to be incredulous.

"At any rate, you mustn't go there," she said sternly.

Clif and Ben looked greatly disappointed. Having learned that the temple of Jumna was only five miles away by a beaten track they were more anxious than ever to visit it.

To be told that they must not go there was not at all to their liking. They were sure that they would never get another chance to visit it. As for the peril of the undertaking, they were inclined to believe it was much magnified. How could foreign eyes hurt an old bronze idol? However, Clif felt that it would not be polite to argue the matter with the fair girl. As a matter of fact, both he and Ben were greatly struck by her fresh,

girlish beauty and engaging ways, and both wished to make a good impression on her.

It needed no great astuteness to see that Elise Holt was particularly attracted to Clif. He had performed a daring and gallant act in her behalf, and that alone predisposed her in her favor. His manly ways and good looks had their effect on her, too. Therefore, before long Ben had to admit that Clif had the pull with the handsome English girl, and he metaphorically threw up the sponge. Suddenly Clif recollected the adept.

"Go into the inner cave, Ben, and see what the fakir is doing. Look out for the tiger and the snakes."

Ben entered the cavern and was gone but a moment or two.

"He isn't in there," he told Clif.

"He isn't?"

"No, nor his menagerie, either. The cave is empty of living things. There is a supply of rice and fruit laid out in bowls on a rug. Probably it is meant for us, for the old fellow told us it was written we were to enjoy his hospitality."

"As he and his animals couldn't have left the cavern this way without our seeing them go, there must be a back entrance to the place."

"No doubt there is, but I didn't notice it."

"Are you hungry, Miss Holt?" asked Clif politely.

"Yes," she answered with a little rueful smile.

"Then you shall dine with us. Is that brazier alight, Ben?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll go inside and eat. I wouldn't mind a peck myself. We haven't any fruit since we left the schooner."

"Nor rice, either," said Ben.

The girl looked doubtfully at the entrance to the inner cavern, and hugged close to Clif, as her protector, as Ben led the way inside. There was a bountiful supply of provisions displayed on the rug.

"The fakir figured on Miss Holt," said Clif, pointing at three small mats placed about the rug, and three bowls of cooked rice in front of each of them.

"The fakir is all to the mustard in my opinion," said Ben approvingly. "I wonder what's in those little stone bottles?"

"Taste it and see," said Clif.

"Some kind of a sweet drink, like light wine," replied Ben, after taking a sip.

The three made a hearty meal on the good things, and while eating Clif told the girl all about their experiences since leaving the schooner on the afternoon of the third day previous. Miss Holt shuddered at the story of Ben's narrow escape from the boa constrictor and regarded Clif more admiringly than ever. It was easy to see that she was already more than half in love with her rescuer. As for Clif, he was about dead gone on the fair girl himself by this time.

Ben began to realize that he was *de trop*, which is French for being in the way. However, he couldn't very well efface himself under the circumstances, so he contented himself with putting in a word once in a while. Clif wound up his narrative with the remarkable performance of the adept.

"Why, he actually produced a letter from my father to me out of the air," he said. "I guess

he must have hypnotized us first and we imagined the letter."

"No," said the girl. "those Mahatmas are gifted with wonderful powers."

"You don't mean that, do you?" cried Clif in surprise.

"I do, for I've seen them do tricks."

"What did you see them do?"

"We had an old and peculiar jar with a crack in it which we left in our London home where my aunt lived. As an evidence of his power, an adept, who enjoyed my father's hospitality one day, agreed to bring that jar to India inside of twenty-four hours."

"Did he do it?" asked Clif incredulously.

"Inside of the stipulated time he seemed to produce that jar in our sitting-room in Bombay," replied the girl with a positive nod of her head.

"Did you see it?"

"I did, and held it in my hands. We all agreed that it was the jar, for the crack was in the right place. But when the man departed the jar vanished and papa said he hypnotized us and that we only imagined we saw the jar."

"We'll take your word for it," said Clif. "Then you think that letter was from my father, and that it came from Madras, 100 or more miles away?"

"You can easily prove it by asking your father on your return if he wrote such a letter."

"That's so," replied Clif. "If he did—well, say, I'll be willing to believe those fakirs can do all they claim."

"Where is the letter?" Elise asked.

"The letter!" ejaculated Clif, scratching his ear. "Blessed if I know. I had it in my hand when we heard you scream outside and then I forgot all about it and rushed to your aid. Look around, Ben, and see if it is on the floor here."

Both boys looked, but the letter was not around.

"It's gone. The fakir must have picked it up and put it somewhere."

They talked together till it grew dark and then Clif said they would remain at the cave until morning, as it wasn't safe to travel through the jungle at night.

"You can sleep in here, Miss Holt, and we'll lie down near the entrance. Ben and I will take turns watching."

As the girl felt tired and sleepy they left her and went into the outer cave.

CHAPTER XI.—What Happened in the Night.

Soon after Clif went on watch the wind rose outside in the jungle. And with the wind came a terrible thunder and lightning storm. For an hour it raged with a fearful violence. The thunder seemed to shake the very earth, while the lightning was the brightest the boys had ever seen in their lives. Ben couldn't sleep in such an uproar, and he sat up during his watch. Just as the storm seemed to be passing away a terrific thunderbolt struck the outer cave and laid the boys out unconscious on the stony floor. The bolt came with the tail end of the storm, which passed away toward the coast. Twenty minutes later several shadowy forms crept to the mouth of the cave. Entering the places with great caution they seen found the unconscious forms of the two boys.

The leader of the party was the big Hindoo from whom Clif had wrested Elise Holt. He ordered the boys to be bound hand and foot. This was quickly done, and they were carried to the back of the cave. The Hindoo and his companions then went into the inner cave. In a few moments the place resounded with Elise's cries. "Help! Help! Clifford, save me, oh, save me!"

But Clif, like Ben, was dead to the world for the time being, and neither could help her. She was dragged shrieking from the cave and forced into the palanquin, where she fainted and was borne away by two natives, the entire party following.

It was close on to daylight when Clif came to his senses. When he attempted to sit up he found he couldn't.

"Good gracious! I'm bound hard and fast. What's the meaning of it?" he asked himself in no little consternation. "Ben! Ben! Where are you, old fellow?"

He received no reply, for although Ben was stretched close behind him he was still insensible to his surroundings.

"What the deuce can have happened?" continued Clif in a fever of perplexed impatience. "Who could have bound me, and how could it have been done without my becoming aware of the fact?"

From his reflections it was apparent that Clif had no idea that he and his friend had been knocked out by the thunderbolt.

"Can this be some crooked work on the part of the fakir? I hardly think so. He acted very friendly to us. Had he wanted to do us up he had every chance when we first entered the cave. Where can Ben be? Ben! Ben! I say, Ben!"

As before, he received no reply to his shouts. Then he began shouting for Miss Holt, but the girl didn't appear, as a matter of course.

"There is something decidedly wrong. The last thing I remember we were having a terrible thunderstorm. Now the storm is gone. I must have been insensible for some time. What made me insensible? That's what I want to know."

Daylight came on quickly once it got started, and then Clif discovered Ben within a couple of feet of him. His friend was just recovering consciousness.

"Say, you're a hard one to wake up," said Clif. "I see you're in the same fix I'm in—bound hand and foot. I s'pose you haven't any idea how this thing happened."

Ben hardly heard him, so astonished was he on discovering his predicament.

"What in thunder does this mean, Clif?" he asked.

"That's the question I've been asking you," returned Clif.

"Don't you know anything about it?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Why, you're bound, too."

"You bet I am, hard and fast."

"Gee whiz! Something has happened. We've been made prisoners."

"Looks like it, but I haven't seen or heard anything of our captors since I woke up about half an hour ago."

"Do you think it was the fakir who served us this way?"

"No."

"Who, then?"

"Oh, ask me something easy, will you?"

"But somebody did it."

"Sure thing. We couldn't have done it in our sleep."

"How about Miss Holt? Call her and get her to cut us loose."

"Have called her, but she hasn't made her appearance."

"Then I have it," said Ben, as if the mystery had been suddenly solved. "You know the chap who carried her from her home, and from whom you rescued her?"

"I remember he was a big fierce-looking Hindoo."

"He's been here with some of his friends. He had us tied up this way and then he went into the inner cave, found Miss Holt there, and carried her off again."

"By George! I never thought of that. I believe you've hit the nail on the head," said Clif excitedly.

"With your great head it's a wonder that you didn't think of that right off."

"If she's really gone that rascal has come on us unawares and nabbed her. He has taken her to the temple of Jumma as sure as you're alive."

"Sure, for that's where she told us he was bound for in the first place."

"We must follow and rescue her."

"Sure, but it will be necessary for us to get free first."

"Then let's see what we can do in that line. I have made two or three attempts on my bonds, but they hold as fast as giant cement."

Nothing more was said for a few minutes, during which the boys tried to free themselves.

At last Ben gave a shout of satisfaction.

"I've got one hand free; yes, and the other, too!" he added joyfully. "If my knife is still in my pocket I'll have my legs out of limbo in a minute, and then I'll get you out of your fix."

Ben found his knife all right and a minute later he was hacking at Clif's bonds. The sharp jack-knife made short work of the thongs, and Clif was soon free, too.

"They didn't take my revolver."

"Nor mine, either."

"I don't miss a thing."

"Nor I. They must have been in a great hurry when they failed to clean us out. Wait a minute; I'm going to make sure that Miss Elise is gone."

Clif rushed into the inner cave and soon saw that she was missing. There was no longer any doubt in his mind as to what had happened to her.

"It won't be well for that rascal if I meet him," gritted the boy. "There's our rifle, which they never touched."

Clif returned to the outer cave and held a council of war with Ben.

"We must start for the temple of Jumma at once," he said.

"I'm with you," agreed Ben.

"Miss Elise must be saved at all hazards."

"That's right, and in revenge for the way she's been treated we must get away with that big blue stone if we get half a chance. I want you to understand that I, for one, am after that idol's eye. If we can bring that to Madras we'll get our names in the papers."

Clif was more interested in the fate of the girl just then than in the prospect of getting possession of the big blue stone.

"I wonder where the fakir went?" he said. "If he were here now he might be able to help us."

"As he isn't here we must help ourselves," replied Ben.

"We'll eat a bite or two and then make a start," said Clif. "We left enough last night to make a respectable breakfast."

The boys re-entered the inner cavern, got away with the remainder of the rice and fruit, and then, there being nothing more to detain them, they left the fakir's cave en route for the temple of Jumma.

CHAPTER XII.—The Treasure of the Jungle.

The sun was well up above the horizon when the boys spied a small village in the distance.

"We are getting close to the temple," said Clif. "This must be the village that Flint said lay within half a mile of the building."

Ben nodded.

"They left the beaten track and plunged in among the trees. At length, after half an hour's progress, they came in sight of a curious looking building rising in the very midst of the jungle."

"I believe that's the temple," said Clif in a low tone.

"I'll bet it is," coincided Ben. "There doesn't seem to be a soul about."

"Then this is our chance to get a glimpse of the idol."

"There's the wide open door Flint spoke about," said Ben, pointing.

"I see it. Come on."

They made their way with extreme caution to a point within a few feet of the opening, and then paused to reconnoiter. Not a sound was to be heard either in the building or around the immediate vicinity. To all appearances the temple was deserted. Entering the building, which was illuminated by the glow from a swinging brazier, the boys found themselves in the presence of the famous idol of Jumma. It was a tall, hideous-looking figure made out of dark bronze, with gold trimmings, and ropes of precious stones of every kind.

In every respect it was exactly as Flint had described it, which proved that the sailor had either seen it, as he claimed, or had got a correct description from some person who had viewed it at close quarters.

A huge blue star, constructed of innumerable small sapphires, covered the pit of its stomach, and in the center of this blazed the Treasure of the Jungle—the big blue stone—which in shape resembled a human eye. The boys stood transfixed and gazed open-mouthed at a sight few foreigners had ever got a glimpse of. At that moment a curtain at the end of the temple opposite the door was drawn noiselessly back and the priest of the edifice appeared framed in the opening. His dark bearded countenance grew ominously forbidding as his eyes lighted on the intruders.

Neither of the boys was aware of his presence. "Gee!" breathed Ben. "This is something worth coming a long distance to see."

"The big blue stone!" whispered Clif, pointing at the great shining jewel.

As he sprang eagerly forward a puff of greenish smoke suddenly issued from under the gem

and enveloped his face. Its overpowering odor staggered the boy. He threw up his arms wildly and fell back into the arms of his companion. The smoke evidently came from some ignited drug which had been blown through a hole in the idol by a hidden helper of the Hindoo priest. The priest glided forward between the boys and the idol and raised his arm in a threatening manner, at the same time uttering some words in Hindoostanee. Clif gasped once or twice and then pulled himself together. The priest spoke again and his manner was so menacing that the boys realized that they were in a tight fix. Ben picked up the rifle he had dropped to catch Clif and both lads backed toward the door.

Their escape, however, was blocked by the sudden appearance of three natives from the jungle.

Obeying a command from the priest, they flung themselves on the boys and secured them in spite of their struggles, taking the rifle from Ben. The priest uttered another order and the prisoners were dragged around to a hut at the back of the temple. Here the boys were bound without ceremony and thrust inside the building, where they were left to meditate over what they were up against.

"Gee! We're in a fix this time for sure," said Ben.

"Looks like it, but we mustn't give up the ship," replied Clif.

In about half an hour the boys heard a noise at the door, which opened, admitting two dark-skinned persons. The one in advance was the priest, the other was Salambo, the shark-charmer. The door was left open to admit the light. The priest stood back while Salambo advanced and stood over the prisoners.

"Young sa'bs, much bad fix, eh?" he grinned malevolently. "How get 'way other night when tiger come? P'haps explain."

"Why didn't you kill that tiger, you lobster?" replied Ben. "He might have ate us up."

"Tiger no easy kill. How you got loose dat 'casion?"

"We made friends with the tiger and he let us loose," answered Ben.

"Sa'b tell much big lie," said the shark-charmer with a frown. "Where you been dese two, t'ree day, eh?"

"We've been trying to get out of the jungle," replied Clif.

"Why come here?"

"Because it was on our way," said Clif, who did not consider it necessary to explain their intentions to the old rascal.

"Why walk in temple?"

"To see what was in there."

"You see Great Jumma, s'pose?"

"Yes, we saw it, all right."

"Much sorry for sa'bs."

"You look sorry," replied Clif in a tone of disgust.

"Never see schooner 'gain. Stay here till tomorrow. Then head come off 'fore Great Jumma."

"Do you mean to say that we're going to be killed because we looked at that idol?"

"Dat 'cordin' to law of Great Jumma. No help for it."

"Tell the priest that my father, who is American consul at Madras, will ransom us at any reasonable price."

"No good, sa'b. He no listen."

"Try him."

Salambo turned and said something to the priest, but whether the rascal was really translating Clif's request, or only pretending to do so, the boys had no idea, for his language was Greek to them. The priest shook his head and stamped his foot angrily.

"Much sorry, sa'b. Must lose head. Salambo see only one chance to save young sa'bs."

"Oh, you see a chance, do you?" replied Clif with interest. "What is it?"

"Me lose pearls me take from sa'b. S'pose you know where put finger on them so me get 'em back, then Salambo do what he can for you on quiet. Understandin'?"

The shark-charmer favored Clif with a significant and eager wink. Clif felt, however, that the rascal was not to be trusted.

"How should I know where those pearls are?" he said. "You have them."

"Then sa'b no found them, eh?"

"Where would I find them?"

"Round place where tiger come."

"Did you lose them there?"

The shark-charmer nodded.

"Sorry I can't tell you where they are," replied Clif.

The shark-charmer got down and began to feel of Clif's body, evidently in search of the bag of pearls. He struck a protuberance that felt like the article, but it was in an inside pocket, and on account of the cord around the boy's arms he couldn't get at it. Instantly he yanked out his knife and cut the cord. As the old rascal started to pull open his jacket the boy wriggled aside and struck the Hindoo in the face a blow that dazed him. The knife dropped from his hand.

Clif seized it and cut his legs loose. Then in the confusion he set Ben at liberty. Ben seized a stool that was in the place and knocked the priest insensible with it, then they both attacked Salambo, and threatening him with his own knife, bound and gagged him with the cloth of the priest's turban. They then bound and gagged the priest. Shoving the pair into a corner they covered them with dried vegetable fiber that had done duty as a bed.

"Now to escape if we can," said Clif, starting for the open door.

CHAPTER XIII.—In Which Ben Takes Possession Of The Big Blue Stone.

Peering out cautiously the boys could not see a soul in sight.

"Looks as if we had a good chance to get off into the jungle without attracting attention," said Ben. "But before we go we can strip the idol of the jewels and the big blue stone."

"But we came here to save Elise Holt," said Clif.

"I'm afraid we can't do anything for her under the circumstances."

"We must try and do something. Only cowards would desert a woman in distress."

"We don't know that she was brought here," objected Ben. "We can't afford to monkey around on a chance and lose our lives. I'm going into the temple."

Without waiting for his companion to offer

any objection he crossed the open space to the back door of the Hindoo building and disappeared inside. Clif was obliged to follow. Entering the temple he found himself in a small room, with a couch, sundry other articles, and a ladder in one corner leading to the conical roof above. Ben was not there. Walking over to the curtain which divided the room from the idol apartment he looked in and saw Ben removing the big rope of diamonds and other precious stones from the shoulders of the statue. Instead of joining him something impelled him to run up the ladder and see what was above. Tiny slits in the roof flooded the loft with sunshine. His roving eyes lighted on a crouching female figure in one corner.

"Elise—Miss Holt!" cried Clif joyfully.

"Clifford!" she ejaculated, with a scream of delight.

He rushed over to her. She tried to raise her arms to him, but could not, for they were bound to a ring in a post.

"You have come to save me?" she said, eagerly.

"I have," he replied, as he cut her loose with the shark-charmer's knife, which he carried in his hand.

"You are a brave, noble boy!" she cried, impulsively throwing her arms around his neck.

"Come! We have no time to lose," he said. "We were captured ourselves, and only escaped by accident. We are in great danger of our lives, but whatever happens, you can rely on me, Elise. I will save you, or die fighting in your behalf."

Clif was about to lead her down the stairs when they heard a noise below.

"Clif! Where are you?" came Ben's voice.

"Here I am, old fellow! I've found Miss Holt. We'll be right down."

"Don't stir, on your life!" came back from Ben. "I'm coming up there!"

In another moment he came scrambling up the ladder.

"Glad to see you, Miss Holt," he said. "Silence is the word now, for there's a crowd of natives coming this way from the village."

Then, with a grin of satisfaction, he held up his rifle in one hand and in the other the big blue stone, the Treasure of the Jungle, while one of his pockets bulged with the jeweled rope. Elise uttered a gasp of terror.

"You have robbed the idol of Jumna," she quivered. "We will never escape from here alive. Even if we could get away in safety, we should be followed to the world's end by Hindoos sworn to recover that stone or lose their lives in the attempt. The search for that stone would never be given up, if it took more years than the natural span of our lives. Foolish boy! You must put it back!"

Elise shuddered, and clung tremblingly to Clif. Looking through the slits in the roof, the beleaguered three saw perhaps a hundred natives approaching the temple from the direction of the village. They gathered around the building a circle, one old, white-haired Hindoo alone advancing to the back door of the temple. He called to the priest, but, of course, received no answer from that person, as the reader knows he was in the hut behind, bound hand and foot, as well as unconscious. After calling on the priest several times, without success, the old man ven-

tured into the room where the protector of the temple lived. Seeing that the priest was not there, he rejoined the villagers. At a sign from him they all squatted down and began a solemn chant to Jumna. A period of silence followed, during which the white-haired man looked anxiously around for the priest.

"I wonder how long they intend to stay?" asked Ben, impatiently.

"They are waiting for the priest," said Elise. "It is funny he should be away from here. He is not supposed to leave the temple at all."

"He's not very far away," grinned Ben.

Then Clif told her how they had been captured while looking at the idol; how they had been bound hand and foot, and left in the hut yonder, and how they had been visited by the priest and the rascally shark-charmer, with the result the reader knows.

"Then the priest is at this moment a prisoner in that hut?" said Elise, regarding the nerve of the boys as something wonderful.

"That's where he is," replied Ben, "and where he's likely to remain, unless some of these chaps look in there and release him."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth before there was a sudden commotion among the natives. Looking to see the cause, the three young people saw Salambo dragging the senseless form of the priest out of the hut.

CHAPTER XIV.—Encompassed By Peril.

Salambo held up the helpless form of the priest and spoke excitedly to the white-haired old chap. He, in turn, addressed the natives in a quick and authoritative way. In a few minutes the entire assemblage scattered through the jungle, a dozen or so taking the path back in the direction of the Mahatma's cave.

"The fat is in the fire now," said Ban. "Those fellows have gone in search of us. Somebody is bound to come up here to look after you, Miss Holt, and then Clif and I will be discovered. However, they won't get us without a fight. This rifle and our revolvers will keep them at bay a while. Can you use a pistol, Miss Holt?"

"I can."

"Not afraid to shoot to save your life, eh?"

"I have fired a revolver more than a hundred times."

"Good! Take mine, then. I'll use the rifle," said Ben.

"I forgot to ask you how and by whom you were carried off from the cave last night," said Clif. "We woke up this morning to find ourselves helpless, and bound hand and foot. At first we could not understand how you could have been taken away without our knowing about it, but we have since remembered that the cave was struck by a lightning bolt which knocked us unconscious. We were undoubtedly in that state when the cave was visited by those who took you away. We figured it out that the man who kidnapped you from your home was at the bottom of the matter."

"Yes, he was. His name is Sahib Khan. He brought me here, and wanted the priest to marry me to him at once. When I told the priest who my father was, and all the circumstances of the

case, he told Sahib Khan that he could not solemnize the marriage until after he had consulted Great Jumna as to the advisability of it. He told Sahib Khan that he would take me temporarily under his protection, and guaranteed that I should not escape in the meanwhile."

While they were talking, in guarded tones, Salambo and the white-haired old man succeeded in restoring the priest to his senses. The three held a brief conversation together, then Salambo started off down the trail, while the white-haired man went toward the village.

"I wonder what this is for?" said Ben, laying hold of a rope that ran up through the loft from a corner of the idol room to the roof. He discovered that it was attached to a bell.

"I'll bet it's an alarm bell," he said, after a moment's thought.

"Better cut it, then," said Clif.

Ben did so, and made a huge knot in the severed end, so that it would still hang the same as usual. The priest entered the room below, and they heard him moving around there for a while.

Then he went into the idol room. In a moment he discovered the desecration of the idol. He was simply frantic. He seized the bell-rope and pulled it vigorously, but the bell did not ring out.

With a malediction he sprang up the ladder to see what the cause was, and came face to face with the three young people. He also found himself covered by the rifle and the two revolvers.

"Order him up the rest of the way, Elise," said Clif.

The girl addressed the priest in his own language. He hesitated to obey, but finding that he had no show against the trio, reluctantly complied with the mandate. Ben and Clif then bound and gagged him so that he was helpless. It was now after midday, and the boys began to realize that they were hungry, a sensation that Elise also participated in.

"I'll go downstairs and forage about," said Clif, "while there's no one in sight."

Elise begged him, with much anxiety, to be careful of himself for her sake, and he promised that he would. He didn't have to go further than the room below, where he found a bountiful supply of rice and fruits, which he brought upstairs to his companions. They made a good meal, which they washed down with a cordial prepared by the priest himself for his own use.

"The question is, how are we going to get away?" said Clif. "We can't start out in broad daylight, for the jungle is full of the natives, looking for us."

"If we sneak after dark the jungle will be alive with animals, ready to pounce on us," said Ben, dubiously.

"If we can start just as soon as darkness sets in, keep to the beaten track as far as the cave, five miles away, we may escape the beasts. They don't really get about much before a couple of hours or more after sunset," said Clif.

"We'll have to chance it anyhow, for we couldn't very well remain here undiscovered for very many hours. The priest will be missed again, and a search will be made for him. Some of the searchers might come up here, and then our name would be Tim Flynn beyond any doubt."

Nothing happened to alarm them until close on to sundown, when Salambo and a party of na-

tives appeared. The shark-charmer stood outside the back door and called the priest.

Naturally, he received no answer. Finally he came back and sat down to wait. He was not a very good waiter, and he decided to look into the temple building, though this was against the regulations. He chased the natives around front before he attempted it. Then he entered the back room. Not finding the priest, he ventured to ascend to the loft. As his head rose above the floor he saw the girl first, then the priest, lying bound and gagged, in the corner. He rushed up to release him, and then found himself confronted by Clif and Ben with drawn revolvers.

"Utter a sound, and you're a dead shark-charmer!" said Clif sternly, pressing the cold muzzle of his revolver against the old rascal's temple.

The fellow was an arrant coward at heart, and he collapsed. He was bound, gagged, and placed beside the priest. As the sun set, the young people ate some more of the fruit and finished the rice.

"We will start as soon as night sets in to cover our movements," said Clif.

In half an hour it was dark enough for their purpose, and they were on the point of starting when more natives turned up and called for the priest. This crowd cut off their retreat from the rear.

"Now what are we going to do?" asked Ben, in a nervous voice.

CHAPTER XV. —Conclusion.

Salambo's party in front came around and joined the latest arrivals, and a powwow took place between them.

"The natives all seem to be at the back now," said Clif. "We'll try and make our way out through the idol room."

Led by Clif, they descended to the room below, which was as dark as pitch.

Clif and Elise were passing the curtain that divided the two rooms, when Ben encountered a creeping object, which proved to be a native who had ventured into the priest's living-room.

Knowing he had no right to be there, the native let out a yell and fled into the night. That startled both the natives outside and the three young people.

"Come on! We have no time to lose!" whispered Clif, hastily forcing the girl toward the front door. "Where are you, Ben?"

"Here I am! I ran against one of those natives, who was crawling about the room in the dark," he said.

"Hold your weapons handy for instant use," warned Clif as they issued into the jungle. At that moment they heard the voice of Salambo shouting. He had managed to get rid of his gag, and was taking instant advantage of it.

"He's calling for help," said Elise. "Let us run!"

Clearly they had not a moment to lose, and they hurried along as fast as they could go toward the trail. They were still struggling along in their efforts to find the beaten track when a great hubbub filled the air around the temple.

"They've found Salambo and the priest, I'll

bet," said Ben. "We'll be in for it hot and heavy in a few minutes."

In a few minutes, to their great satisfaction, they hit the road to the cave, and started for it on a jog trot. It wasn't long before they were aware that the natives were in pursuit.

There was little doubt that they would be soon overhauled.

"There's only one chance now for us," said Clif. "Something must be done to distract their attention. Give me your rifle and cartridge belt, Ben, and take my revolver."

The exchange was quickly made.

"Now run along with Elise, and I will cover your retreat," Clif said.

"No, no!" cried the girl, throwing her arms around his neck. "You must not stay behind!"

Elise clung to Clif hysterically until he was obliged to tear her arms from his neck. Then he disappeared in the darkness, and presently the crack of his rifle was heard a hundred feet back, mingled with the scream of a badly wounded Hindoo. Ben, understanding the wisdom of his friend's purpose, grabbed the weeping Elise and rushed her down the trail in the gloom. The pursuit was checked by Clif's shot, and the Hindoos, led by Salambo, quickly surrounded the big tree where the plucky boy had taken refuge, believing they had cut off the three fugitives. As the natives closed in, Clif kept up a continuous fire as he perceived their white turbans moving in the jungle. Every shot brought down a Hindoo, and they grew cautious and held aloof. In the silence that succeeded Clif slipped away from the tree and crawled into the jungle, as silently as an Indian on the war-path. He had scarcely got a dozen feet from the tree when he ran against a creeping native, advancing with great caution. The fellow uttered a yell and grabbed the boy. Clif used his rifle. The Hindoo let out another yell, and released his hold of the boy. Clif glided away in the darkness as the man's companions came rushing to the spot where he lay wounded, and making the jungle hideous with his cries of pain. The young American reached the beaten path again and sped down it like a runner trying for a record. Gradually he left the pursuers behind, for Salambo and his crowd, believing they had the fugitives almost in their grasp, remained in the vicinity of the tree where Clif had done the shooting, beating the brush in every direction.

In the meantime the priest, who had remained behind at the temple, succeeded in reaching the upper end of the severed belt-rope, and the fugitives could hear the clang, clang of the bell raising the echoes of the jungle. Ben urged the disconsolate girl on faster.

"They have caught and perhaps murdered him," she quivered, as she permitted herself to be forced onward. "I don't care if I die now! I don't want to live if he is dead!" she sobbed.

"I don't believe they've caught him," said Ben, reassuringly, though he had his doubts ever since the rapid crack of the rifle had ceased.

"If they haven't, they will. They are sure to do so, there are so many of them; and the treatment of the priest cries aloud to them for vengeance."

"Well, we'll hope for the best. Clif's life will cost them dear, in any case," said Ben.

At length they came in sight of the Mahatma's cave, and made a quick dash for it. Ben led Elise into the rear cavern, and then they sat down to rest and await the appearance of Clif, if he was so fortunate as to escape from their enemies. Thus twenty minutes of anxious suspense to Ben and Elise passed. Ben had gone to the main entrance to watch, when he saw a dark figure rushing toward the cave. With drawn revolver he awaited the approach of the person, hoping it might be Clif, but fearing that it wasn't. At length the figure eased up, stopped, and appeared to listen; then approached the cave more leisurely. Ben's heart beat fast.

"I believe it is Clif!" he said excitedly.

In a few moments there was no doubt of the fact. Ben rushed forward and gripped him by the hand.

"Glory! but I'm glad to see you, old man! I was afraid you were done for. Elise is all broke up about you. She's in the inner cave. Go in and comfort her."

Clif ran inside, calling to the girl. With a scream of joy she flew to his arms, and they were soon locked in a close embrace.

"Oh, Clif! Clif! I thought——"

"Never mind what you thought, dearest. I got away from the crowd, though not without doing up several of them, and here I am, safe and sound."

"I'm so happy!" she cried, nestling close to him in her joy and contentment.

We will not dwell on what passed between them during the next few minutes, but they were soon interrupted by the appearance of Ben.

"The natives are coming toward the cave! There's a big mob of them. Let's see if there isn't a rear exit from this place. There must have been a way for the fakir to leave, for he got away yesterday without our seeing how he did it," said Ben.

Accordingly they made for the back of the inner cavern, and soon found a tortuous passage that led to the outer air. Climbing a big tree, they awaited the next move on the part of the natives. At that moment they saw lights approaching in the distance, from the direction they had originally come. Three wagons, full of native constabulary, drawn by stout horses, came dashing up the beaten way. In the front wagon were Captain Glaze and William Flint. Clif recognized their faces in the light of the flaring torch and gave a shout of joy.

"There's the captain and Flint!" he cried to Ben. "Fire your revolver, and yell as hard as you can!"

Some of the natives issuing from the rear entrance to the cave rushed toward the tree on hearing the noise. Clif, Ben and Elise opened fire on them at once. The wagons stopped, the constables alighted, and soon a big melee was on, during the progress of which the boys and Elise ran up to Captain Glaze and Flint.

"What in thunder brought you boys away out here in the jungle?" cried Captain Glaze. "And who is this young lady with you?"

"We'll tell you everything when we're out of danger," replied Clif.

In a few minutes the constables had put the natives to flight, and then the captain's party, with the rescued boys and Miss Holt, began to retrace their way. They camped for the night at

the first clearing they came to, and there Clif told the captain and Flint all about their adventures since leaving the schooner that afternoon for what they supposed would be a brief trip to the shore. Needless to say, Captain Glaze and Flint as well, were amazed at what they had gone through.

"You'll have to give up that big blue stone and that rope of gems," he said to Ben. "We'll be surrounded before morning and a demand will be made on us for them. You've foolishly committed a great sacrilege in Hindoo eyes."

Ben kicked against this, however. Then the captain held a consultation with the leader of the constables. The result was camp was broken at once, and the journey through the jungle continued. After that the trip was pushed toward the coast by a short route known to the constables, and the party finally reached the shore. The captain then hurried the boys and the girl aboard the schooner, got up anchor, and started at once for Madras, where they arrived the next day. We will not dwell on the astonishment of Mr. and Mrs. Halliday on hearing about their son's and his friend's astonishing adventures in the Indian jungle. The consul shook his head when Ben produced the big blue stone and the rope of jewels.

"They must be returned," he said. "You never would reach America alive with them in your possession. You'd be dogged from the moment you left the protection of the consulate by Hindoos, whose one mission would be to recover those gems."

The truth of the consul's words were shown that afternoon, when the priest of the Jumna temple appeared and demanded the return of the big blue stone and gems. Ben reluctantly gave them up. Then Clif showed the priest the yellow pearl. The man's eyes glistened when he saw what a fine specimen it was, and he offered Clif a large sum of money for it. Clif held out for more and got it. Altogether he received \$5,000 for the silver pearl and the gold one. Of this sum he gave Ben \$500. Mr. Halliday sent word to the consulate office at Bombay that Elise was safe at his home in Madras, having been rescued from her abductor by his son.

The next steamer brought the girl's father to Madras. He could not thank Clif enough for saving his child. The parting between Elise and Clif was a tearful one, but each swore eternal constancy to the other. A few weeks later Clif and Ben, returning to New York, were the guests of Mr. Holt for ten days at his elegant villa in Bombay. Clif asked the Englishman for his daughter's hand after his four years' college

course had been finished, and Mr. Holt consented to their engagement. In due time Elise and Clif were married, in London, with Ben as best man, and the newspapers not only chronicled their marriage, but gave much space to a description of their romantic meeting in the Indian jungle when the bridegroom and his friend were after the big blue stone.

Next week's issue will contain "LITTLE JAY PERKINS, THE BROKER; OR, SHEARING THE WALL STREET LAMBS."

TWO NOTED CAVES

So far as is now known, the United States can lay claim to having the largest caves in the world, and first among these is, naturally, Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. It is only about eighty-five miles from Louisville. Upon visiting its depths it is easy to see how the word mammoth is coupled with its natural name, for parts of it have been explored for a distance of over 150 miles and maps made so that the guides themselves can't get lost. The main body of the cave is only about three miles long, yet parts of this section furnish the famous halls and domes, some of which are 175 feet wide and 124 feet high.

This great cavern has many small lakes and rivers, the best known of these being Echo River, which reverberates an echo to an untold distance, repeating the sound of your voice until only a whisper is heard at the last. The fish in this and the other bodies of water are white and have no eyes. There are also crickets, bats, flies, beetles, spiders and other queer blind creatures to be found here, and it is interesting to watch them when they are taken out into the light. Being blind, their movements are quite slow and cautious when compared to their kind that live out in the open. In taking a hike through this world's largest cave the guides light up the way so that many beautiful things can be seen, such as the Star Chamber, where the lofty ceiling is studded with snowy crystals that glisten like diamonds. When white men first discovered Mammoth Cave they found many stone arrowheads, pieces of torches and other relics which indicated that it had once been a meeting place for the Indians, and for all we know countless numbers of war dances may have taken place in the famous Star Chamber just mentioned.

Wyandotte Cave is another one of our great caverns and ranks next to Mammoth Cave in both size and interest. It is in Crawford County, Ind., and so far has been explored for more than twenty-three miles. In its depths are found many formations similar to those of its bigger sister, one of the chambers being 200 feet high and 300 feet broad. The temperature and moisture in the air are so even that you can walk a great distance without feeling the least fatigue until coming out into the open once more. But if you happen to be one of those few folks who do not indulge in hikes you'll certainly feel the results of the long walk after sitting around for a few minutes.

TRUE GRIT

or

An Engineer at Eighteen

By Gaston Garne

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

True Grit Reaps Its Own Reward.

"Don't worry; I've forgotten all about it," said Bob generously.

"I don't know what you think of me," said Abe, in a penitent tone, "but if you believe we can ever be friends again I'd like to know it."

"I think it will depend entirely on yourself."

"All I want is a show," said Pindar. "Chet King may have the dust, but hasn't got the manliness or backbone you have. I'm done with him for good. I've been a chump to knuckle down to his views as I've done. I never used to hang around the Exchange till I got thick with him, and now my folks won't stand for it any longer, and I'm glad of it. A good many nice people have begun to fight shy of me. I find it doesn't pay to be a second-hand sport and all that. I'm going to quit smoking and drinking for keeps."

"I hope you will," said Bob, "and to help you along I'll call off the past and let things between us go as they used to."

"Will you?" said Abe, eagerly.

"I will."

"Then I swear to you that I'll keep my word."

The two boys shook hands and Pindar started once more upon the right road.

After Abe Pindar had taken his leave, Bob dressed himself in a new suit, which had come home that day, and started for the handsome residence of Judge Kent, who had sent a note to the cottage that afternoon, asking him to call that evening. He wondered what the judge wished to see him about.

As he passed the building in which the Rushville Bicycle Club had its rooms he almost ran against Bruce Hardy.

"Why, hello, old man, where are you rushing to at such a lively gait?"

"I'm bound for Judge Kent's."

"Oh, I see," said Bruce, with a grin, "that accounts for the new suit and your hurry. Afraid Miss Somebody'll have a conniption fit if you're a minute behind."

"You're away off. My business is with the judge."

"You—don't—say!" said Bruce, incredulously. "Oh, I see," with a mischievous wink; "going to ask him for the hand of his only child. I guess I'd better come later with a shovel to gather up what's left of you after the judge gets through."

"I see I'll have to put the gloves on with you at the first chance. Just wait till I catch you at our house calling on sis, that's all."

"Maybe it's a good thing for you that Myrtle Kent hasn't got a big brother to do up chaps about your size."

"If she had I'd have to call on you to help me out."

"Well, by-by; don't forget the meeting Friday night if you're in town."

"Dear old fellow!" thought Bob as he hastened along. "I do hope he and Bessie will make a match of it. It would be so fine to have a double wedding." Then Bob began to wonder if he wasn't counting his chickens before they were hatched.

As he passed the Exchange, with its brilliantly lighted rooms holding fully a dozen billiard and pool tables, and a fine mahogany bar, with polished brass trappings, while the walls were decorated with fine paintings, he was happy that his taste did not run in that direction. Time spent in that gilded pleasure resort seemed to him thrown away. It might be well enough for a man who had already achieved a position in life to drop in there occasionally and while away an hour, but for the average young man, with his life work still before him, it was putting a mortgage on his future.

Bob didn't know it, but at the very moment he went by Chet King was beginning a new vice—the vice of gambling with cards, led on by his father's cashier, a man with very little principle, it would seem, who hoped by his superior knowledge of the game to rob the unsuspecting but foolish youth out of his money he obtained so easily at home.

Bob rang the bell at the Kent residence, and was shown into the library, where the judge was expecting him.

"Good-evening, Robert," said the owner of the house.

"Good-evening, Judge Kent. I received your note and—"

"Yes, I wished to see you on a little matter of business in which I am acting on behalf of the company. Take the easy-chair. Mrs. Kent and Myrtle will be here presently."

Bob seated himself as directed and awaited developments with some curiosity.

Judge Kent began as follows:

"The Board of Directors of the Round Top Railroad held their regular quarterly meeting two days ago at the company's offices in Denver. A full statement of the attempt of what is now known as the Bunker gang to wreck the eastbound night express at Lone Tree Point about two months ago was placed before the directors, together with the account of the way in which you saved that train at the extreme peril of your life. Further, the directors were furnished by the superintendent of the mountain division with an account of what befell you on engine Thirty-three after the regrettable death of Joseph Beckley, the engineer, and how you managed by remarkable presence of mind and grit to avoid a collision with the night express that evening. Whereupon a resolution was unanimously passed by the said board, praising your conduct on the two occasions mentioned and awarding you as a substantial token of the company's appreciation of your services the sum of ten thousand dollars in gold. Therefore, my dear boy, as the representative of the board in Rushville, it becomes my pleasant duty to present you with the company's check, drawn on the Bank of Rushville, and payable to your order, for the amount in question."

Thus speaking, Judge Kent handed Bob the check. To say that Bob was taken completely by

surprise would but midly express his feelings as he mechanically accepted the oblong bit of paper.

"Judge Kent, I hardly know what to say," he said, with some little confusion. "Then thousand dollars is a lot of money; at least, it is to my mother and I. I hope I have earned it, but it does not seem possible that I have."

"Take my word for it, Robert, you have earned it twice over."

"But, sir, you know I've already received nearly two thousand dollars from the passengers of the night express."

"That was a free gift, entirely independent of what the company has very properly seen fit to do for you."

"Well, sir, I am very grateful to the company for—"

"You needn't be. As a mere matter of business you saved the company thousands of dollars that night. Had that wreck occurred, it would have cost the Round Top Railroad at least half a million for damages, not speaking of the rolling stock, which would have been reduced to kindling wood and old iron. Then, my dear boy, think of the lives your noble action saved. Mrs. Kent would to-night have been a widow and childless," and as the judge spoke the tears came in his eyes. "My dear lad, you have won our lasting gratitude, without any reference whatever to what you did for Myrtle on Decoration Day."

"It will make mother very happy," he said, as he put the check in his pocket.

"One thing more," said the judge, beamingly. "How old are you, Bob?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"You will be the youngest engineer on the road."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean," said the judge, rising and placing his hand on the boy's shoulder, "you have been appointed one of the regular engineers of the Round Top mountain division, the appointment to take effect from yesterday. Report to Mr. Singleton to-morrow morning at 7:30 for instructions."

"Judge Kent, is that a fact?" said the astonished and delighted lad.

"I think you will find it so."

"It is the height of my ambition, sir."

"You have won it entirely on your merits. Here is Mrs. Kent and Myrtle."

"We have come to congratulate you, Robert, on your promotion," said the good lady of the house.

"Thank you, Mrs. Kent, and you, too, Myrtle."

"I think I have a little speech to make, also," said the young lady, with an arch look. "Mr. Blake, on behalf of my father and mother, permit me to present you with this slight token of their esteem."

Myrtle handed Bob a small morocco case.

"Don't be afraid to open it," she said, mischievously, as he looked helplessly at her. "It won't bite you."

Bob accordingly opened the case and found a splendid gold watch. Reader, our story is almost done. It was certainly a day, or night, rather, of surprises for Bob, but one more, the greatest and

most pleasurable of all, awaited him on his arrival home. Nothing more nor less than the absent and long supposed dead husband and father who had turned up at last to bring a holy joy to the faithful little household which had mourned for him so long.

On a business trip to China he had been captured in the China Sea ten years before, and had been held in hopeless captivity by the archipelago pirates until rescued a few weeks since by an American gunboat.

Bob is as frequent a visitor at the Kent mansion as Bruce Hardy is at the Blake cottage, and who can say but that double wedding of his dreams may not be yet realized! At any rate, Myrtle Kent believes Bob Blake is the one boy of Rushville who possesses rare courage and true grit.

The End.

Next week another new serial, titled

WILL, THE WAGON BOY

or, The Diamonds that Came by Express

By GASTON GARNE

Will appear in this Library. It is extremely interesting. Be sure to read it.

NEXT WEEK

ANIMALS THAT USE OTHERS AS WEAPONS OR TOOLS

There is a species of crab, indigenous to the Island of Mauritius that habitually holds a sea-anemone in each claw, using them presumably as weapons of defence—one animal using another as a utensil! There are, however, somewhat similar instances quite as curious. One is that of an ant in the East Indies that builds shelters of leaves whose edges are fastened together with silk fibres.

The origin of this silk had long puzzled entomologists. The ant has no spinning glands of any kind at adult age. Holland, of Balangoda, and Green, of Paradeniya, Ceylon, verifying old and incomplete observations made in India, have proved that the working ants, in order to spin the thread that fastens the edges of the leaves, make use of the larvae of their own species, which they hold in their jaws, moving them about with skill in all directions and afterward returning them to the nest when they have finished with them.

Chun has shown, in a study of the anatomy of these larvae, that they possess spinnerets of unusual size and serving the adults as distaffs, so to speak. They use these organs to spin the cocoon.

The origin of such differentiated instincts, whose manifestations resemble so closely those of intelligence, is one of the difficult problems of zoological psychology.

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

POTATOE-TOMATOE VINE

Growing tomatoe and potatoes on the same vine is the stunt that is being pulled off in Hutchison, Kan. H. E. Turner has a plant on display in a local bank's window. He claims that the two varieties are being grown without artificial help and no grafting has been done.

OLDEST BELL IN USE

The oldest known bell still in use is in the parish church of St. Mary of Loretto, at Villalago, in the Abruzzi Mountains, Italy. Following the inscription "Ave Maria" is "Anno Domini 600." Bells were invented, according to church authorities by Pope Rabianian, who died in 606.

FLOATING ISLANDS

There are many floating islands. These are sometimes caused by a detachment of a portion of a bank, in which the roots are strong enough to hold the soil compact and solid. Others are formed by an accumulation of driftwood in tropical rivers and bays. Many lakes in England, France and Prussia are noted for their floating islands.

THE BRAIN BRINGS SLEEP

The brain is more active while engaged in dreaming than when not thus engaged. The only perfect sleep is that which is dreamless. The moment the sleeper begins to dream he begins to work, and the more vivid and protracted the dream the more intense, naturally, becomes the work. It is possible that at no time during the waking hours of life is the brain so active as it is in the strange business of dreaming.

INTERESTING ITEMS

A sleek and oily preacher of the Holy Roller sect in Alabama permitted a rattlesnake to bite him five times, to show he was immune from harm. A vast crowd attended his funeral.

The wasp adopts the methods of the highwayman. These insects have often been observed to waylay and rob bees while the latter, laden with the fruits of an expedition, were returning to the hive.

It is generally agreed among naturalists that the tortoise is longest-lived of all animals. There are many instances of their attaining the extraordinary age of two hundred and fifty years, while one is actually mentioned as reaching the unparalleled age of four hundred and five years.

Doctor H. L. Ross, of Canaan, Connecticut, took a Maltese cat with him on an automobile trip to Lake Chatiemac, in the Adirondacks. The cat was lost at the lake, but appeared in Canaan twelve days later, thin and almost starved to death after its one-hundred-and-eighty-mile walk.

An automatic camera for judging races has proved successful in France and will be used at the next Paris international race meeting. The camera is placed in line with the winning post, and the winning horse, by breaking a thread, releases the electrically-controlled shutter, and a photograph of the finish is taken.

LAUGHS

"What's the row over on the next street?"
"Only a wooden wedding." "Wooden wedding?"
"Yes, a couple of Poles are getting married."

Host—Must you leave so soon, Mrs. Tootles? I thought you were very fond of good music. Mrs. Tootles—I am. (Mrs. Tootles exits during blank silence.)

Jim—They say it cost no one anything to be polite. Do you believe it? Tim—It may be true in some cases, but it cost me a seat in a movie show to day.

"Prisoner, have you anything to say?" "Only this, Your Honor; I'd be mighty sorry if the young lawyer you assigned to me was ever called upon to defend an innocent man."

Bix—I see there's a report from Holland that concrete bases for German cannon have been found there. Dix—Don't believe a word you hear about Holland. The geography says it is a low, lying country.

"The man who can drive with one hand is the man for me," answered Edna, gayly. "You're easily satisfied," replied her friend, Ruth. "For my part, I prefer the man who asks me to drive."

With but three minutes to catch his train the traveling salesman inquired of the street car conductor, "Can't you go faster than this?" "Yes," the bellringer replied, "but I have to stay with my car."

"What is in the mail from daughter?" asked mother eagerly. "A thousand kisses," answered father, grimly, "and sixteen handkerchiefs, two waists and four batches of ribbons for you to wash and mend."

"Aren't you ashamed of your indolence?" "Indeed I am!" answered Meandering Mike. "I've been tryin' to do something for it." "What?" "I've been takin' the faith cure. I've been choppin' make-believe wood wit' an imaginary ax."

WHY I SUSPECTED HER

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

It is some years since I one day received a call to go to a town on the Hudson River that shall be nameless, nor shall I describe it, further than to say that it is a favorite place of residence for many wealthy men doing business in the City of New York.

The dispatch that took me to the depot in such a hurry bore the signature of Hiram Hardwick, a gentleman whom I knew well, and who had engaged me on several cases, and who had always treated me in the best possible manner.

Hence it was a source of satisfaction to be now hurrying to his assistance in response to a request reading:

"It is in your power to do me a great personal favor. I beg of you hasten to my residence here."

I little dreamed, however, of the nature of the assistance that Mr. Hardwick desired at my hands. On leaving the depot I started to walk to his home. I had been there before, and knew of a short cut across the fields by which I could reach it more quickly than an ordinary hack would convey me there by the longer carriage road around.

I had some minutes before caught sight of the turreted gables of this stylish residence, when I realized that I had strayed from the path, and was lost. This was something not calculated to cause me any apprehension, for I was, at the worst, only a short distance from the house, and would not be compelled to more than cross a field or two. While thus thinking I suddenly came upon a scene that caused my heart to stop beating.

There, in an opening, where the underbrush grew less thick than at other near points, I saw the motionless figure of a man outstretched. He was dead. I knew that the very instant my eyes rested on him. But I knelt, nevertheless, and assured myself of the fact. While kneeling there beside the body I made another discovery.

This murdered man was Philip Hardwick, son of Hiram Hardwick, who had sent for me. I soon found the house. Mr. Hardwick met me at the door.

"I am very glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "I am very much distressed over an occurrence that I cannot explain. Perhaps my fears may be foolish, and if they are I trust that you will do me the favor never to repeat that I sent for you."

"You may depend on me, sir. Now what is this strange occurrence of which you speak?"

"My son, Philip—he is such a careful and thoughtful son, and he never absented himself from home before without giving me some word—he went from here night before last, after supper, and has not since returned, nor have I heard a word from him. My heart misgives me. I want you to find him for me."

How could I tell that fond old man that I had but this minute come from beside the body of that murdered son? It was utterly impossible for me to do so, and hastily drawing to a finish, I took my departure, promising that I would shortly report to him, and saying to myself:

"I must leave it to others to break the news. I will go to the town and send the coroner to take charge of the body."

I had not yet succeeded in finding this individual when I was abruptly halted by a young and handsome lady.

"They tell me you are a detective," she cried. "If you are, I want you to find Philip Hardwick for me."

Philip Hardwick! The mention of the name caused me to glance quickly and keenly at her.

"Pardon me," I said pointedly, "but what may Philip Hardwick have been to you?"

She looked confused, turned her eyes down, and lowly answered:

"He—he was—was—a very dear friend."

"And why are you concerned about him?"

"Because—because—he had promised to call on me last evening, and failed to do so. He had never broken his word with me at any time before, and when I heard today that his father was worried over his absence, and that he had not been seen in some hours, I—I—thought something dreadful must have happened."

I inwardly called myself a brute for thinking that this girl was a coquette. Yet that was the way her words impressed me. I could not feel that they were prompted by an unselfish love for the subject of the conversation, whose dead white face was constantly before my mental eye.

It was an impulse, a strange and unaccountable whim, that led me to suddenly say:

"Come with me. I would like to take a walk through the fields while I ask you some question of Philip Hardwick, about whose disappearance I must confess there is a mystery."

The mystery I hinted at would have forced her to accompany me even had there been no stronger motive.

As we went out of the village I let her talk as she would, on my own part uttering no word save to lead her on.

Inwardly I commented:

"She rattles on at a great rate for a person who at first professed to be profoundly distressed over the disappearance of a lover. She is heartless, of that I am certain, and it remains to be seen if there is anything back of that."

It appeared to me that frequently when she came to a halt she groped mentally for words to continue. In other words her conversation was forced, yet did not appear to me to be forced in that manner which might be expected from one who is trying to rise superior to a great sorrow. I saw from the movements of her eyes that she was conscious of our vicinity, and that we were approaching the home of Philip Hardwick; but she made no comment thereon, as I expected she would.

At last we were close to the spot. I drew her attention in another direction until her feet had almost touched the body of the murdered man. Then, facing her in its direction, I cried:

"Just see there!" She glanced down at the pallid face, and a great change came over her own. But it was not horror nor anguish that was written on it. It was rather a deep surprise, such as might be experienced at having a clever trick played upon one. And it was due to the expression on her face in that transient space of time that I suspected her.

Suspected her of what? I hardly could have said myself of what I suspected her, further than that I believed her profession of love for Philip Hardwick was a sham. An instant, and then falling on her knees beside the corpse she bent her face down, spoke to him, called his name, then clasping her hands above her head, turned a drawn hard face toward me and cried:

"Joe Raymond did this!" And then she hid her face in her hands and began to sob convulsively. I lifted her, supported her from the horrid spot, and must confess to a feeling of pity until it forced itself on me that her sobs were too hard, too dry, too acrobatic, if I may so express it.

"Do not grieve so, little lady," I said, mustering a kindly tone for the occasion. Quiet these sobs. Remember you will soon be in the village. And now tell me who is Joe Raymond?"

"He—he was a sort of rival of—of—Mr. Hardwick."

"A rival?"

"Yes."

"In what?"

"For—for my favors," she hesitatingly, coyly said. "Mr. Hardwick was inclined to be jealous, and I couldn't help teasing him a little, and—and—it made hard feelings between them." Having seen the lady to her boarding place—she was a comparative stranger in town, I learned—I sought out the coroner and sent him to take charge of the body, then went in quest of Joe Raymond. I was not long in finding him—a well-formed, pleasant-faced man of nearly thirty—at sight of whom I told myself that he could not be the murderer.

"Are you Joseph Raymond?" I inquired.

"I am."

"Did you know Philip Hardwick?"

"I did."

"Well, he has been murdered, and suspicion is directed against you. It seems that you were both paying attention to a young lady, and that the rivalry produced some hard feeling."

"There was no rivalry worthy of the name," was the prompt response. "As a matter of fact, both were amusing ourselves by paying attention to a lively and bright young lady who came into town, but I am sure that Phil would no more have married her than I would."

I gave him a quick glance.

"Was her reputation shady?" I inquired.

"I would not wish to say that," was the rejoinder, "but she chose to envelop herself and her antecedents in a mystery that augured no good of her. So it is absurd—"

I interrupted him just there.

"Who is that man yonder? Can you tell me?" indicating an individual whom I had noticed dogging my footsteps, and who was watching with keenest interest the conversation between Raymond and myself.

"That? Oh, that is my cousin."

"Your cousin?"

"Yes."

"Hem! Well, I must ask you to consider yourself under arrest for the present. It is only nominal, but until something further develops I must keep you custody."

"Very well," he answered, without hesitation.

"There is no disgrace in an arrest—the disgrace

comes in the charge being proved, and that it will not be in this instance." The name of Raymond's cousin was Peroy, and his face struck me as being familiar. But I could not say where or when I had seen it.

"Does he live here?" I inquired.

"No. He only came up from New York recently. I have never liked the fellow, perhaps because"—with a laugh—"I give him credit of a desire to see me placed under ground."

"Why should he desire that?"

"Money. If I should die without heirs he would inherit the estate that came to me conditionally."

My eyes opened a trifle, but I made no comments. Less than an hour later I was talking with Peroy, commiserating with him over Raymond's unpleasant position.

He has got himself into a pretty bad box," he rejoined. "I am sorry for him, for he is a first-rate fellow, barring a little hotheadedness. I have seen him—"

Something dropped through the bottom of a defective pocket and struck the ground at our feet. It was a photograph. It fell face upward, and before he could pick it up I caught a glimpse of it. The picture comprised a little group of three—a man, a woman, and a baby. He was the man, and Minnie Gay, as she called herself, was the woman. Click! click!

"Mr. Peroy, you are my prisoner!" The handcuffs were on his wrists even as I made the announcement. Despite his protestations, I conveyed him to the jail, and inside of half an hour Minnie Gay was also a inmate in the guise of a prisoner. The woman soon broke down, yet stubbornly refused to admit a knowledge of the dark crime.

"See here," I argumentatively said, "I can gather the evidence to send both you and Peroy to the gallows, but am willing to afford you an opportunity to turn State's evidence. I am well informed of the nature of the crime. You are Peroy's wife, or worse, and came here to help him steal a fortune. You coquetted with Hardwick and Raymond to breed ill feeling between them, and to cast the murder of one on the other. It was intended that Hardwick should be accused of the murder of Raymond, but in an unforeseen exigency Peroy was forced to murder Hardwick. It was not what you had planned for, but if Raymond could be sent to the gallows Peroy would inherit the estate now in possession of that gentleman. You see, I am familiar with the points. Now tell me all or not, as you please."

The woman made a clean breast of it then. It had been the intention to murder Raymond and cast the burden of the crime on Hardwick. But Hardwick had come upon them at the spot where I found his body, and had overheard enough of what passed to comprehend the villainous plot afoot. The instant Peroy saw Hardwick there he snatched out a revolver and shot him down. Then separating, the guilty couple had hastened to the village there to await events.

It was impossible to do or say anything to assuage the sorrow of Mr. Hardwick over the loss of his son, and I returned to the city that night. A few months later Peroy was hung for the crime and Minnie Gay went to prison for life.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

TURKHENS—NEW BIRD

Mrs. Henrietta Crossman of Temple, Tex., exhibited at the Bell County Poultry Show a pen of turkhens. This breed of poultry is the result of a cross between turkeys, pheasants and chickens. Known as Russian Orloff turkhens, they resemble a chicken more than a turkey, although they are heavier and have heads like turkeys. The meat is more tender than either chicken or turkey, and they are said to be the most wonderful layers in existence.

SNAKE CUT FROM HAND

While a number of citizens of the Ward Bridge community were seining in Richmond Creek a big moccasin fastened its fangs in the left wrist of Stonewall Cummins. Mr. Cummins attempted to choke the snake loose, but failed. The brother of Mr. Cummins then came to his rescue, and with his pocket knife in one hand and grasping the body of the snake in the other severed the reptile's head from the body. The mouth of the decapitated head had to be pried open before the wrist was released. Mr. Cummins received immediate medical attention and suffered but little from the effects of his experience.

SCORPION IN GIFT EASTER EGG STINGS HAND OF PARISIAN SINGER

When Mlle. Juliana Hastre, a young Argentine singer from Buenos Aires, now residing in the Latin Quarter here, opened a fine, big chocolate Easter egg at a party given at a friend's house, the merry cries of the revelers turned to shrieks of horror.

Instead of being filled with sweet liquor or soft melting sugars, the egg, all tied up in pretty ribbons, contained half a dozen big tropical cockroaches and one full-grown scorpion, which struck Mlle. Hastre in the hand with its poisonous dart before it could be killed.

The egg, which was delivered at the artist's residence while she was dressing for dinner, was the gift of Mlle. Van Hong Lu, an Eastern woman now living in India.

The victim of this dangerous practical joke received medical aid instantly and is progressing satisfactorily. The police opened an inquiry into the origin of the outrage. Friends of Mlle. Van Hong Lu unanimously declared she could have had nothing to do with putting the scorpion in the egg.

PHANTOM SHIP OF MEDFORD

The town of Medford, Mass., has a legend of a phantom ship beside which the Flying Dutchman was only a peaceful freighter. The Medford story runs that a ship laden with gold and silver bars and a full consignment of rum put out from that port when the Spanish Main was infested with pirates. It was headed for West Indian ports, but was so long becalmed that water and provisions gave out and all hands perished.

When the wind came up again the slack sails filled and the ship moved. She was seen by a buccaneer, chased and overhauled. The pirate captain made fast to his prize without firing a

shot and, attributing the non-resistance to fear or lack of arms, he was the first man to leap on board.

But the rope with which the captured ship had been carelessly lashed to his own broke under the strain, and he found himself rapidly borne away from his comrades on what he soon discovered to be a floating coffin. A stiff breeze filled the sails of the derelict, and before his own vessel could overtake it night descended on the lonely ocean, and the pursuing ship lost sight of it altogether.

Left alone in darkness on the gruesome craft, the pirate went mad with terror and, seizing the wheel, raced away before the wind. According to the legend, he was condemned to range the seas forever thus, in command of his horrible prize, a just retribution for his sins.

Woe to the ship that encountered the death ship scudding along by moonlight or in the glare of the lightning, manned by skeletons and steered by a shouting, gesticulating madman, for she never saw her home port again. When on several occasions the vessel was said to have been sighted in the fog off Medford, it was always the herald of storm and disaster and the loss of many ships.

FAST TRANS-ATLANTIC PLANE

Estimating that a speed of 200 to 250 miles an hour would be necessary to make trans-Atlantic airplane flights commercially attractive, Walter G. Brenner, a German inventor, has prepared plans for a giant ship which would utilize the decreased air resistance at very high altitudes to make such speed possible. The enormous resistance encountered at low altitudes at high speed would require engines out of all proportion to the plane to overcome it, he believes, but by ascending to between 26,000 and 3,000 feet, the density of the air would be so reduced that its resistance would be correspondingly lessened.

At such heights the passengers, and the motors, too, would have to have air supplied at normal sea-level pressure, so the entire ship as designed is air-tight, the atmosphere being supplied by pumps. His plan calls for a light duraluminum body and wings, designed along the same lines as those of the all-metal Junkers plane but greatly magnified.

The passenger cabins would be located in the wings, now utilized in many metal ships for gasoline tanks. The leading edge of the wings would have glass windows. Control and crew quarters, freight space and additional passenger quarters would be located in the hull. The fuselage plan differs from the usual flying boat type in that it is fitted with two wing-like metal pontoons, one on either side. Although the ship is designed as a monoplane, in the air the set of pontoons would give additional supporting surface.

Herr Brenner's design is based on the fact that a large part of the power developed by a flying machine's motors is used to overcome the air resistance. Without increasing the consumption of fuel, he believes he can double the speed at high altitudes, so that ordinary motors would be large enough to power it.

LITTLE ADS

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CHARMING YOUNG WIDOW—Worth \$38,000 will marry. Write **Eva,** B-1022, Wichita, Kansas.

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MARRY—Free photographs, directory and descriptions of wealthy members. Pay when married. **New Plan Co.,** Dept 36, Kansas City, Mo.

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MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY with photos and descriptions free. Pay when married. **The Exchange,** Dept. 545, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—Write for big new directory with photos and descriptions. Free. **National Agency,** Dept. A. 4606. Station E., Kansas City, Mo.

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GOOD READING

SIMPLEST WET BATTERY THAT CAN BE MADE

Perhaps the most simple wet cell which can be made, says Experimental Science (Washington), is from a copper wire previously heated in a blue gas flame, and a silver wire, both held in running water. The copper wire in the gas flame becomes coated with a film of copper oxide.

A varied effect can be produced by separating the copper and silver wires by blotting paper and wrapping them with the same material, and then pouring one of the common electrolytes upon the whole. Sal ammoniac or sulphuric acid can be used.

HIS CIGAR MONEY

Many stories are told of fortunes being made by economy in little things, but here is one which is quite new. An elderly New York broker began to use tobacco when a mere boy. Becoming convinced of the folly of this habit when he became older, he one day threw away his cigar and never bought another. He had been a moderate smoker, and it was in the old days when cigars were cheap, so that six cigars a day cost only thirty-seven and a half cents, for they were six and a quarter cents apiece. That sum of thirty-seven and a half cents he put aside every day, and at intervals deposited it in a savings bank. He discovered that in round numbers it amounted to one hundred and thirty-six dollars and fifty cents a year. He never abandoned the habit of laying this money aside, and it brought him seven per cent. interest. At the end of fifty-eight years it amounted to ninety-six thousand, seven hundred and nineteen dollars and forty-nine cents. With that money he purchased a fine estate, consisting of two acres and a home. With it he has educated his children and spent occasional sums for benevolent purposes.

He tells of fruit and shade trees, of a horse and cow and calf and chickens, and of merry days beside the beautiful sound, so that there are hints upon which a duller fancy than mine can rear a picture of a splendid property and home. A table which he has prepared is prefaced with the statement that "friends have expressed doubts in regard to the correctness of his assertion." He admits that it seems incredible, and therefore he gives the exact figures of each year's savings. One hundred and thirty-six dollars and fifty cents was saved the first year, and that sum should be added each succeeding year, beside the interest. It must be admitted that he has taken an unfair advantage of us of this generation by performing his remarkable feat at seven per cent. interest, whereas we cannot get above three or four per cent. in a savings bank. But surely a mere difference in the interest obtainable will not deter any smoker who reads this from breaking off the habit of smoking.

FROLIC WITH A SHARK

A correspondent in one of his letters from Santa Cruz, W. I., gives the subjoined account of a rencontre with that dangerous fish, the power-

ful shark: The marauding, dreaded shark, always rife in tropical climates, is so common here as to deprive us of the luxury of open sea bathing. The negro shell divers disregard these monsters, and some of the planters bathe after sending a negro further out into the sea as a sentinel.

We had a rare frolic with a shark a few days since. A Spanish schooner came in here with cattle. The cattle had been several days upon short allowance of water, and, in swimming them ashore in their weakened condition, two of them died. One of the carcasses was taken by the negroes and anchored half a mile from the shore to bait sharks with. The rascals soon made their appearance. The harpoon was sent with sure aim into a huge fellow, who darted off with such force as to break the line. But three of the school soon returned, one of which was struck with better fortune.

This one, after powerful but unavailing struggles to escape, rose to the surface of the water, and then the negroes got a round hitch upon his tail, when they pulled for the shore. The word was passed through the streets that a shark was coming in. This drew a large concourse of white, "ringed, speckled and gray" spirits to the beach. When the boat approached the shore a negro landed with a line to which the shark was fast, and which was seized by men, women and boys, who, with infinite glee, drew the common enemy struggling and floundering, with the blood streaming from his side and nostrils, high and dry upon land. This shark was eight feet long, and though the harpoon had gone deep into his vitals, he displayed an activity and strength which admonished us to keep at a respectful distance. Its skin is smooth and sleek like that of a seal, or porpoise, and, but for its enormous mouth, you would suppose it quite as harmless.

After forcing its mouth open with a handspike, and thrusting a large stone into its maw, it was cut open for its liver, which yielded seven gallons of lamp oil. But the shark had with him the evidence of having feasted bountifully upon unroasted beef before the harpoon had done its office. Not less than thirty pounds of beef dropped from under his gasket. Among other delicate bits was a sirloin weighing twelve or fifteen pounds, with two entire and still unbroken ribs. During this process the shark floundered with prodigious strength, and even after its vitals were all out the body retained a spasmodic action; and finally when the negroes rolled the trunk back into the sea, its native element seemed to impart a sort of galvanic life, for the contortions continued until it sank out of sight.

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